

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Health Policy

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BILL: SB 428

INTRODUCER: Senator Yarborough and others

SUBJECT: Swimming Lesson Voucher Program

DATE: January 16, 2026

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1. Looke	Brown	HP	<b>Favorable</b>
2. _____	_____	AHS	_____
3. _____	_____	FP	_____

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## **I. Summary:**

SB 428 amends the Swimming Lesson Voucher Program (SLVP) established by s. 514.073, F.S., to require that children who participate in the program must be between the ages of one and seven, rather than the current-law requirement of four years of age or younger.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2026.

## **II. Present Situation:**

### **The Danger of Drowning**

Drowning is one of the leading causes of accidental death among children. For all ages, the current annual global estimate is 295,000 drowning deaths, although this figure is thought to underreport fatal drownings, in particular boating and disaster related drowning mortality.

Drowning disproportionately impacts children and young people, with over half of all drowning deaths occurring among people younger than 25 years old. In many countries, children under five years of age record the highest rate of fatal and non-fatal drowning, with incidents commonly occurring in swimming pools and bathtubs in high income countries and in bodies of water in and around a home in low income contexts.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Drowning Deaths in Florida***

Drowning deaths in Florida have consistently ranged between 350 and 500 deaths per year in the state from 2005 to present at an average rate of approximately two deaths per

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<sup>1</sup> Peden AE, Franklin RC. Learning to Swim: An Exploration of Negative Prior Aquatic Experiences among Children. Int J Environ Res Public Health, May 19, 2020, available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7277817/> (last visited Jan. 14, 2026).

100,000 population.<sup>2</sup> Children aged four and under, however, drown nearly three times as often with a rate of approximately six per 100,000 population.<sup>3</sup> Comparably, children between the ages of one and seven drown at a rate of approximately five per 100,000 population and made up 87 out of 452, or nearly 20 percent, of the drowning deaths in Florida in 2024.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Formal Swimming Lessons and Drowning Prevention***

Learning to swim has been found to be an effective drowning prevention strategy and has been proposed by the World Health Organization as one of ten key strategies for global drowning prevention. Participation in formal swimming lessons has been shown to reduce drowning risk among children aged 1-19 years, and a recent review of evidence suggests that teaching aquatic competencies to young children causes no increased risk, particularly when combined with the additional drowning prevention strategies of supervision, restricting access to water, and caregiver training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).<sup>5</sup> Swimming lessons have been found to be particularly effective in protecting children age 0-4 from drowning with one study showing that formal swimming lessons were associated with an 88 percent reduction in the risk for drowning for that population.<sup>6</sup>

### **Florida's Swimming Lesson Voucher Program**

In 2024, the Florida Legislature passed SB 544<sup>7</sup> which created the SLVP in s. 514.073, F.S. The SLVP is administered by the Department of Health (DOH) and provides vouchers for swimming lessons to families who have an income of 200 percent of federal poverty level or lower, who are Florida residents, and have one or more children aged four and under. To ensure that the vouchers are accepted, the SLVP also requires the DOH to establish a network of swimming lesson providers where the vouchers may be used. Eligible families who apply for, and receive, a voucher through the SLVP can exchange the voucher for swimming lessons through any swimming lesson provider who is part of the DOH's network.<sup>8</sup>

The SLVP initially received \$500,000 in funds appropriated by the Legislature for state fiscal year 2024-2025. Additionally, the DOH was able to secure an additional \$200,000 in grant funding from the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and several county health departments contributed \$143,400 in discretionary funds to supplement the appropriation, bringing the total funding to \$843,400 for lessons provided through June 30, 2025.<sup>9</sup> For state fiscal year 2024-2025, the DOH received 16,663 applications for and awarded 4,945 swimming

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<sup>2</sup> Florida Health Charts, Deaths from Unintentional Drowning, available at <https://www.flhealthcharts.gov/ChartsDashboards/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=Death.DataViewer&cid=0105>, (last visited Jan. 14, 2026).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* (Rate type changed to “crude” and age range selected from “0 to 4”).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *Supra*, note 2.

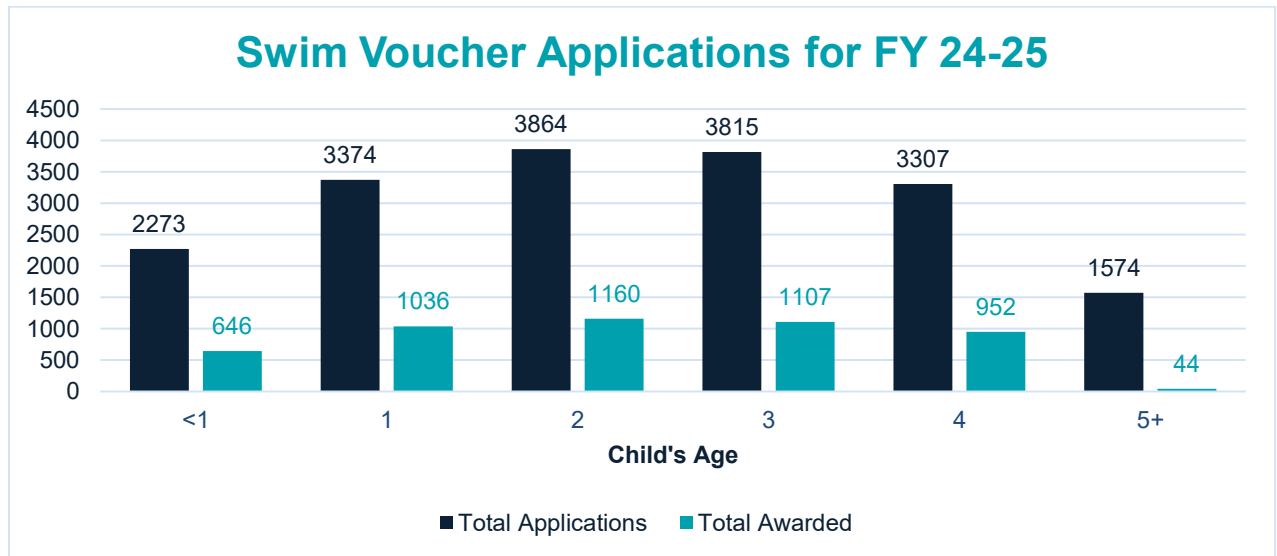
<sup>6</sup> Brenner RA, Taneja GS, Haynie DL, Trumble AC, Qian C, Klinger RM, Klebanoff MA. Association between swimming lessons and drowning in childhood: a case-control study. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med.* 2009 Mar;163(3):203-10. doi: 10.1001/archpediatrics.2008.563. PMID: 19255386; PMCID: PMC4151293.

<sup>7</sup> Chapter 2024-89, L.O.F.

<sup>8</sup> A list of swimming lesson providers who are part of the network, and the requirements that such providers must meet, are available at [WaterSmartFL](https://www.water-smart.org/fl), (last visited Jan. 14, 2026).

<sup>9</sup> Swimming Lesson Voucher Program Legislative Report 2025, p. 8, on file with Senate Health Policy Committee staff.

lesson vouchers.<sup>10</sup> See below for a chart of the distribution of voucher applications and awards by age:



For state fiscal year 2025-2026, the Legislature increased the funding for the SLVP to \$1 million and required the DOH to prioritize the dissemination of vouchers to eligible families who are active military or whose eligible child has autism.<sup>11</sup>

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

SB 428 amends the SLVP established by s. 514.073, F.S., to require that children who participate in the program must be between the ages of one and seven, rather than the current-law requirement of four years of age or younger.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2026.

### IV. Constitutional Issues:

#### A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

#### B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

#### C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* at p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> *Supra* n. 9 at p. 12.

**D. State Tax or Fee Increases:**

None.

**E. Other Constitutional Issues:**

None.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:****A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

SB 428 may have a positive fiscal impact on families seeking swimming lessons for children ages five to seven who will qualify for a voucher under the changes made by the bill. The bill may have a negative fiscal impact on families with children not yet one year old who will no longer qualify for a voucher.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

None.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends section 514.073 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:****A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.