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LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate

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House

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Floor: 1/AD/2R

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03/05/2026 10:24 AM

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Senator Harrell moved the following:

**Senate Amendment (with title amendment)**

Delete everything after the enacting clause  
and insert:

Section 1. Paragraph (b) of subsection (3) of section  
1004.85, Florida Statutes, is amended, and subsection (9) is  
added to that section, to read:

1004.85 Postsecondary educator preparation institutes.—

(3) Educator preparation institutes approved pursuant to  
this section may offer competency-based certification programs  
specifically designed for noneducation major baccalaureate



12 degree holders to enable program participants to meet the  
13 educator certification requirements of s. 1012.56. An educator  
14 preparation institute choosing to offer a competency-based  
15 certification program pursuant to the provisions of this section  
16 must implement a program developed by the institute and approved  
17 by the department for this purpose. Approved programs shall be  
18 available for use by other approved educator preparation  
19 institutes.

20 (b) Each program participant must:

21 1. Meet certification requirements pursuant to s.  
22 1012.56(1) by obtaining a statement of status of eligibility in  
23 the certification subject area of the educational plan and meet  
24 the requirements of s. 1012.56(2) (a)-(f) before participating in  
25 field experiences.

26 2. Demonstrate competency and participate in field  
27 experiences that are appropriate to his or her educational plan  
28 prepared under paragraph (a). Beginning with candidates entering  
29 an educator preparation institute in the 2022-2023 school year,  
30 a candidate for certification in a coverage area identified  
31 pursuant to s. 1012.585(3) (f) must successfully complete all  
32 competencies for a reading endorsement, including completion of  
33 the endorsement practicum through the candidate's field  
34 experience, in order to graduate from the program.

35 3. Before completion of the program, fully demonstrate his  
36 or her ability to teach the subject area for which he or she is  
37 seeking certification by documenting a positive impact on  
38 student learning growth in a prekindergarten through grade 12  
39 setting and, except as provided in s. 1012.56(7) (a)3., achieving  
40 a passing score on the professional education competency



41 examination, the basic skills examination, and the subject area  
42 examination for the subject area certification which is required  
43 by state board rule.

44 4. For each participant who is certified in exceptional  
45 student education, complete the autism micro-credential created  
46 pursuant to s. 1004.551(1)(f).

47 (9) By August 1, 2027, as a condition for continued program  
48 approval, each educator preparation institute must offer  
49 instruction and training on evidence-based practices for  
50 teaching students with autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome,  
51 other developmental disabilities, and emotional or behavioral  
52 disabilities, consistent with the uniform core curricula  
53 developed by the department.

54 Section 2. Section 1009.636, Florida Statutes, is created  
55 to read:

56 1009.636 Autism educator loan forgiveness program.—

57 (1) The Legislature finds that an adequate supply of  
58 special education teachers is critical to provide students who  
59 have a neurodevelopmental disability, such as autism spectrum  
60 disorder, with individualized education to foster essential  
61 social-emotional skills, provide positive interventions, and  
62 build life skills for independence. The Autism Educator Loan  
63 Forgiveness Program is created to recruit and retain qualified  
64 individuals to serve as special education teachers for students  
65 with autism spectrum disorder.

66 (2) To be eligible, an individual must:

67 (a)1. Have earned a master's or higher degree in special  
68 education or exceptional student education from an accredited  
69 institution and have an active student loan balance from



70 completion of that degree, and hold a temporary or professional  
71 certificate; or

72 2. Have earned a bachelor's or higher degree from an  
73 accredited institution and have an active student loan balance  
74 from completion of that degree, hold a temporary or professional  
75 certificate, and hold the Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement  
76 or Severe or Profound Disabilities Endorsement; and

77 (b) Serve as the primary teacher in a public school  
78 classroom in which a majority of the students have autism  
79 spectrum disorder.

80 (3) Eligible participants may receive up to \$17,500 in  
81 total student loan repayment assistance over 5 years, disbursed  
82 in annual payments not to exceed \$3,500 per year. Payments must  
83 be made directly to the lender servicing the participant's  
84 student loan.

85 (4) In order for the department to release each annual  
86 payment, a teacher must:

87 (a) Have completed a full year of service pursuant to  
88 paragraph (2) (b).

89 (b) Have received a rating of effective or highly effective  
90 pursuant to s. 1012.34.

91 (c) Not have had any disciplinary action taken by the  
92 school district or by the department against the teacher's  
93 certificate.

94 (5) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules to  
95 administer this section.

96 Section 3. Paragraph (c) of subsection (1) and paragraph  
97 (a) of subsection (3) of section 1012.22, Florida Statutes, are  
98 amended to read:



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99           1012.22 Public school personnel; powers and duties of the  
100 district school board.—The district school board shall:

101           (1) Designate positions to be filled, prescribe  
102 qualifications for those positions, and provide for the  
103 appointment, compensation, promotion, suspension, and dismissal  
104 of employees as follows, subject to the requirements of this  
105 chapter:

106           (c) *Compensation and salary schedules.*—

107           1. Definitions.—As used in this paragraph:

108           a. “Adjustment” means an addition to the base salary  
109 schedule that is not a bonus and becomes part of the employee’s  
110 permanent base salary and shall be considered compensation under  
111 s. 121.021(22).

112           b. “Grandfathered salary schedule” means the salary  
113 schedule or schedules adopted by a district school board before  
114 July 1, 2014, pursuant to subparagraph 4.

115           c. “Instructional personnel” means instructional personnel  
116 as defined in s. 1012.01(2)(a)-(d), excluding substitute  
117 teachers.

118           d. “Performance salary schedule” means the salary schedule  
119 or schedules adopted by a district school board pursuant to  
120 subparagraph 5.

121           e. “Salary schedule” means the schedule or schedules used  
122 to provide the base salary for district school board personnel.

123           f. “School administrator” means a school administrator as  
124 defined in s. 1012.01(3)(c).

125           g. “Supplement” means an annual addition to the base salary  
126 for the term of the negotiated supplement as long as the  
127 employee continues his or her employment for the purpose of the



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128 supplement. A supplement does not become part of the employee's  
129 continuing base salary but shall be considered compensation  
130 under s. 121.021(22).

131 2. Cost-of-living adjustment.—A district school board may  
132 provide a cost-of-living salary adjustment if the adjustment:

133 a. Does not discriminate among comparable classes of  
134 employees based upon the salary schedule under which they are  
135 compensated.

136 b. Does not exceed 50 percent of the annual adjustment  
137 provided to instructional personnel rated as effective.

138 3. Advanced degrees.—A district school board may use  
139 advanced degrees in setting a salary schedule for instructional  
140 personnel or school administrators if the advanced degree is  
141 held in the individual's area of certification.

142 4. Grandfathered salary schedule.—

143 a. The district school board shall adopt a salary schedule  
144 or salary schedules to be used as the basis for paying all  
145 school employees hired before July 1, 2014. Instructional  
146 personnel on annual contract as of July 1, 2014, shall be placed  
147 on the performance salary schedule adopted under subparagraph 5.  
148 Instructional personnel on continuing contract or professional  
149 service contract may opt into the performance salary schedule if  
150 the employee relinquishes such contract and agrees to be  
151 employed on an annual contract under s. 1012.335. Such an  
152 employee shall be placed on the performance salary schedule and  
153 may not return to continuing contract or professional service  
154 contract status. Any employee who opts into the performance  
155 salary schedule may not return to the grandfathered salary  
156 schedule.



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157           b. In determining the grandfathered salary schedule for  
158 instructional personnel, a district school board must base a  
159 portion of each employee's compensation upon performance  
160 demonstrated under s. 1012.34 and shall provide differentiated  
161 pay for both instructional personnel and school administrators  
162 based upon district-determined factors, including, but not  
163 limited to, additional responsibilities, school demographics,  
164 high-demand teacher needs areas, and level of job performance  
165 difficulties.

166           5. Performance salary schedule.—By July 1, 2014, the  
167 district school board shall adopt a performance salary schedule  
168 that provides annual salary adjustments for instructional  
169 personnel and school administrators based upon performance  
170 determined under s. 1012.34. Employees hired on or after July 1,  
171 2014, or employees who choose to move from the grandfathered  
172 salary schedule to the performance salary schedule shall be  
173 compensated pursuant to the performance salary schedule once  
174 they have received the appropriate performance evaluation for  
175 this purpose.

176           a. Base salary.—The base salary shall be established as  
177 follows:

178           (I) The base salary for instructional personnel or school  
179 administrators who opt into the performance salary schedule  
180 shall be the salary paid in the prior year, including  
181 adjustments only.

182           (II) Instructional personnel or school administrators new  
183 to the district, returning to the district after a break in  
184 service without an authorized leave of absence, or appointed for  
185 the first time to a position in the district in the capacity of



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186 instructional personnel or school administrator shall be placed  
187 on the performance salary schedule.

188       b. Salary adjustments.—Salary adjustments for highly  
189 effective or effective performance shall be established as  
190 follows:

191           (I) The annual salary adjustment under the performance  
192 salary schedule for an employee rated as highly effective must  
193 be at least 25 percent greater than the highest annual salary  
194 adjustment available to an employee of the same classification  
195 through any other salary schedule adopted by the district.

196           (II) The annual salary adjustment under the performance  
197 salary schedule for an employee rated as effective must be equal  
198 to at least 50 percent and no more than 75 percent of the annual  
199 adjustment provided for a highly effective employee of the same  
200 classification.

201           (III) A salary schedule shall not provide an annual salary  
202 adjustment for an employee who receives a rating other than  
203 highly effective or effective for the year.

204       c. Salary supplements.—In addition to the salary  
205 adjustments, each district school board shall provide for salary  
206 supplements for activities that must include, but are not  
207 limited to:

208           (I) Assignment to a Title I eligible school.

209           (II) Assignment to a school that earned a grade of "F" or  
210 three consecutive grades of "D" pursuant to s. 1008.34 such that  
211 the supplement remains in force for at least 1 year following  
212 improved performance in that school.

213           (III) Certification and teaching in high-demand teacher  
214 needs areas. Statewide high-demand teacher needs areas shall be



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215 identified by the State Board of Education under s. 1012.07.  
216 However, the district school board may identify other areas of  
217 high-demand needs within the school district for purposes of  
218 this sub-sub-subparagraph and may remove areas identified by the  
219 state board which do not apply within the school district.

220 (IV) Assignment of additional academic responsibilities.

221 (V) Completion of the Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement.

222

223 If budget constraints in any given year limit a district school  
224 board's ability to fully fund all adopted salary schedules, the  
225 performance salary schedule shall not be reduced on the basis of  
226 total cost or the value of individual awards in a manner that is  
227 proportionally greater than reductions to any other salary  
228 schedules adopted by the district. Any compensation for  
229 longevity of service awarded to instructional personnel who are  
230 on any other salary schedule must be included in calculating the  
231 salary adjustments required by sub-subparagraph b.

232 (3) (a) *Collective bargaining.*—Notwithstanding provisions of  
233 chapter 447 related to district school board collective  
234 bargaining, collective bargaining may not preclude a district  
235 school board from carrying out its constitutional and statutory  
236 duties related to the following:

237 1. Providing incentives to effective and highly effective  
238 teachers.

239 2. Implementing intervention and support strategies under  
240 s. 1008.33 to address the causes of low student performance and  
241 improve student academic performance and attendance.

242 3. Implementing student discipline provisions required by  
243 law, including a review of a student's abilities, past



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244 performance, behavior, and needs.

245 4. Implementing school safety plans and requirements.

246 5. Implementing staff and student recognition programs.

247 6. Distributing correspondence to parents, teachers, and  
248 community members related to the daily operation of schools and  
249 the district.

250 7. Providing any required notice or copies of information  
251 related to the district school board or district operations  
252 which is readily available on the school district's website.

253 8. The school district's calendar.

254 9. Providing incentives to exceptional student education  
255 teachers who complete the Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement,  
256 in addition to any stipend funded in the General Appropriations  
257 Act for completion of the endorsement, and who serve as the  
258 primary teacher in a classroom in which a majority of the  
259 students have autism spectrum disorder.

260 Section 4. Paragraph (g) of subsection (2) of section  
261 1012.551, Florida Statutes, is amended, and subsection (4) is  
262 added to that section to read:

263 1012.551 Teacher preparation core principles, standards,  
264 and content.—

265 (2) The uniform core curricula for each state-approved  
266 teacher preparation program must meet, at a minimum, the  
267 following standards:

268 (g) Must include strategies for differentiated instruction  
269 to meet student needs, including English language learners and  
270 students with disabilities, while maintaining grade-level  
271 expectations. The strategies must also include specific training  
272 aligned with evidence-based practices for supporting students



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273 with autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, other  
274 developmental disabilities, and emotional or behavioral  
275 disabilities applicable across all levels of support.

276 (4) Each state-approved teacher preparation program using  
277 the uniform core curricula developed pursuant to this section  
278 must include the autism micro-credential created pursuant to s.  
279 1004.551(1)(f), which shall count for at least 1 semester hour  
280 toward completion of the program.

281 Section 5. Paragraph (g) is added to subsection (2) of  
282 section 1012.552, Florida Statutes, to read:

283 1012.552 The Coaching for Educator Readiness and Teaching  
284 (CERT) Certification Program.—

285 (2) PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.—A CERT program must include all  
286 of the following:

287 (g) Required successful completion of the autism micro-  
288 credential created pursuant to s. 1004.551(1)(f) for a candidate  
289 certification in exceptional student education.

290 Section 6. Paragraph (e) of subsection (3) of section  
291 1012.585, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

292 1012.585 Process for renewal of professional certificates.—

293 (3) For the renewal of a professional certificate, the  
294 following requirements must be met:

295 (e) Beginning July 1, 2014, an applicant for renewal of a  
296 professional certificate must earn a minimum of one college  
297 credit or the equivalent inservice points in the area of  
298 instruction for teaching students with disabilities. The  
299 requirement in this paragraph may not add to the total hours  
300 required by the department for continuing education or inservice  
301 training. Beginning August 1, 2027:



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302           1. Instruction for teaching students with disabilities must  
303 include autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, other  
304 developmental disabilities, and emotional or behavioral  
305 disabilities.

306           2. An applicant certified in exceptional student education  
307 must earn the autism micro-credential created pursuant to s.  
308 1004.551(1)(f), which must count toward 3 college credits or the  
309 equivalent inservice points. Once earned, an applicant is not  
310 required to earn the micro-credential for additional renewal  
311 periods.

312           Section 7. Subsection (3) is added to section 1012.586,  
313 Florida Statutes, to read:

314           1012.586 Additions or changes to certificates; duplicate  
315 certificates; reading endorsement pathways.-

316           (3) Personnel certified in exceptional student education  
317 who complete the Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement are  
318 eligible for a stipend as specified in the General  
319 Appropriations Act.

320           Section 8. Paragraph (b) of subsection (5) of section  
321 1012.98, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

322           1012.98 School Community Professional Learning Act.-

323           (5) The Department of Education, school districts, schools,  
324 Florida College System institutions, and state universities  
325 share the responsibilities described in this section. These  
326 responsibilities include the following:

327           (b) Each school district shall develop a professional  
328 learning system as specified in subsection (4). The system shall  
329 be developed in consultation with teachers, teacher-educators of  
330 Florida College System institutions and state universities,



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331 business and community representatives, and local education  
332 foundations, consortia, and professional organizations. The  
333 professional learning system must:

334 1. Be reviewed and approved by the department for  
335 compliance with s. 1003.42(3) and this section. Effective March  
336 1, 2024, the department shall establish a calendar for the  
337 review and approval of all professional learning systems. A  
338 professional learning system must be reviewed and approved every  
339 5 years. Any substantial revisions to the system must be  
340 submitted to the department for review and approval. The  
341 department shall establish a format for the review and approval  
342 of a professional learning system.

343 2. Be based on analyses of student achievement data and  
344 instructional strategies and methods that support rigorous,  
345 relevant, and challenging curricula for all students. Schools  
346 and districts, in developing and refining the professional  
347 learning system, shall also review and monitor school discipline  
348 data; school environment surveys; assessments of parental  
349 satisfaction; performance appraisal data of teachers, managers,  
350 and administrative personnel; and other performance indicators  
351 to identify school and student needs that can be met by improved  
352 professional performance.

353 3. Provide inservice activities coupled with follow-up  
354 ~~follow-up~~ support appropriate to accomplish district-level and  
355 school-level improvement goals and standards. The inservice  
356 activities for instructional and school administrative personnel  
357 shall focus on analysis of student achievement data; ongoing  
358 formal and informal assessments of student achievement;  
359 identification and use of enhanced and differentiated



360 instructional strategies that emphasize rigor, relevance, and  
361 reading in the content areas; enhancement of subject content  
362 expertise; integrated use of classroom technology that enhances  
363 teaching and learning; classroom management; parent involvement;  
364 and school safety.

365 4. Provide inservice activities and support targeted to the  
366 individual needs of new teachers participating in the  
367 professional learning certification and education competency  
368 program under s. 1012.56(8) (a).

369 5. Include a professional learning catalog for inservice  
370 activities, pursuant to rules of the State Board of Education,  
371 for all district employees from all fund sources. The catalog  
372 must be updated annually by September 1, must be based on input  
373 from teachers and district and school instructional leaders, and  
374 must use the latest available student achievement data and  
375 research to enhance rigor and relevance in the classroom. Each  
376 district inservice catalog must be aligned to and support the  
377 school-based inservice catalog and school improvement plans  
378 pursuant to s. 1001.42(18). Each district inservice catalog must  
379 provide a description of the training that middle grades  
380 instructional personnel and school administrators receive on the  
381 district's code of student conduct adopted pursuant to s.  
382 1006.07; integrated digital instruction and competency-based  
383 instruction and CAPE Digital Tool certificates and CAPE industry  
384 certifications; classroom management; student behavior and  
385 interaction; extended learning opportunities for students; and  
386 instructional leadership. District plans must be approved by the  
387 district school board annually in order to ensure compliance  
388 with subsection (1) and to allow for dissemination of research-



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389 based best practices to other districts. District school boards  
390 shall submit verification of their approval to the Commissioner  
391 of Education no later than October 1, annually. Each school  
392 principal may establish and maintain an individual professional  
393 learning plan for each instructional employee assigned to the  
394 school as a seamless component to the school improvement plans  
395 developed pursuant to s. 1001.42(18). An individual professional  
396 learning plan must be related to specific performance data for  
397 the students to whom the teacher is assigned, define the  
398 inservice objectives and specific measurable improvements  
399 expected in student performance as a result of the inservice  
400 activity, and include an evaluation component that determines  
401 the effectiveness of the professional learning plan.

402         6. Include inservice activities for school administrative  
403 personnel, aligned to the state's educational leadership  
404 standards, which address updated skills necessary for  
405 instructional leadership and effective school management  
406 pursuant to s. 1012.986.

407         7. Provide for systematic consultation with regional and  
408 state personnel designated to provide technical assistance and  
409 evaluation of local professional learning programs.

410         8. Provide for delivery of professional learning by  
411 distance learning and other technology-based delivery systems to  
412 reach more educators at lower costs.

413         9. Provide for the continuous evaluation of the quality and  
414 effectiveness of professional learning programs in order to  
415 eliminate ineffective programs and strategies and to expand  
416 effective ones. Evaluations must consider the impact of such  
417 activities on the performance of participating educators and



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418 their students' achievement and behavior.

419 10. For all grades, emphasize:

420 a. Interdisciplinary planning, collaboration, and  
421 instruction.

422 b. Alignment of curriculum and instructional materials to  
423 the state academic standards adopted pursuant to s. 1003.41.

424 c. Use of small learning communities; problem-solving,  
425 inquiry-driven research and analytical approaches for students;  
426 strategies and tools based on student needs; competency-based  
427 instruction; integrated digital instruction; and project-based  
428 instruction.

429  
430 Each school that includes any of grades 6, 7, or 8 shall include  
431 in its school improvement plan, required under s. 1001.42(18), a  
432 description of the specific strategies used by the school to  
433 implement each item listed in this subparagraph.

434 11. Provide training to reading coaches, classroom  
435 teachers, and school administrators in effective methods of  
436 identifying characteristics of conditions such as dyslexia and  
437 other causes of diminished phonological processing skills;  
438 incorporating instructional techniques into the general  
439 education setting which are proven to improve reading  
440 performance for all students; and using predictive and other  
441 data to make instructional decisions based on individual student  
442 needs. The training must help teachers integrate phonemic  
443 awareness; phonics, word study, and spelling; reading fluency;  
444 vocabulary, including academic vocabulary; and text  
445 comprehension strategies into an explicit, systematic, and  
446 sequential approach to reading instruction, including



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447 multisensory intervention strategies. Such training for teaching  
448 foundational skills must be based on the science of reading and  
449 include phonics instruction for decoding and encoding as the  
450 primary instructional strategy for word reading. Instructional  
451 strategies included in the training may not employ the three-  
452 cueing system model of reading or visual memory as a basis for  
453 teaching word reading. Such instructional strategies may include  
454 visual information and strategies which improve background and  
455 experiential knowledge, add context, and increase oral language  
456 and vocabulary to support comprehension, but may not be used to  
457 teach word reading. Each district must provide all elementary  
458 grades instructional personnel access to training sufficient to  
459 meet the requirements of s. 1012.585(3)(f).

460 12. Provide at least one autism-specific professional  
461 development opportunity annually for instructional personnel and  
462 school-based administrators. The professional development must  
463 be developed and delivered in coordination with the district's  
464 assigned Center for Autism and Related Disabilities and must  
465 include evidence-based practices for supporting students with  
466 autism spectrum disorder across all levels of need, including  
467 academic instruction, behavioral supports, communication  
468 strategies, and inclusive practices.

469 Section 9. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.

470  
471 ===== T I T L E A M E N D M E N T =====

472 And the title is amended as follows:

473 Delete everything before the enacting clause  
474 and insert:

475 A bill to be entitled



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476 An act relating to students with autism spectrum  
477 disorder; amending s. 1004.85, F.S.; requiring certain  
478 program participants at educator preparation  
479 institutes to complete the autism micro-credential;  
480 requiring each educator preparation institute to offer  
481 training on teaching students with certain  
482 disabilities; creating s. 1009.636, F.S.; providing  
483 legislative findings; creating the Autism Educator  
484 Loan Forgiveness Program; providing eligibility  
485 requirements; providing criteria for loan repayment  
486 assistance; providing requirements for teachers to  
487 receive an annual payment; requiring the State Board  
488 of Education to adopt rules; amending s. 1012.22,  
489 F.S.; revising the list of activities for which a  
490 district school board must provide salary supplements;  
491 revising the list of district school board duties  
492 collective bargaining may not preclude; amending s.  
493 1012.551, F.S.; revising core curricula for teacher  
494 preparation programs; requiring a teacher preparation  
495 program to include the autism micro-credential;  
496 amending s. 1012.552, F.S.; providing that the  
497 Coaching for Educator Readiness and Teaching  
498 Certification Program must include completion of the  
499 autism micro-credential; amending s. 1012.585, F.S.;  
500 revising requirements for the renewal of a  
501 professional certificate; amending s. 1012.586, F.S.;  
502 providing that personnel certified in exceptional  
503 student education who complete the Autism Spectrum  
504 Disorder Endorsement are eligible for a stipend;



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505 amending s. 1012.98, F.S.; requiring a professional  
506 learning system to provide at least one autism-  
507 specific professional development opportunity;  
508 providing requirements for the professional  
509 development; providing an effective date.