

CS/HB 7205 — Professional Sports Franchises

by Full Appropriations Council on Education & Economic Development; Governmental Affairs Policy Committee, and Reps. Schenck and others (CS/SB 2540 by Community Affairs Committee and Senator Fasano)

Currently, s. 288.1062, F.S., specifies a process by which the Governor's Office of Tourism, Trade, and Economic Development (OTTED) has certified 10 local governments to receive up to \$15 million each in state sales tax revenues to help pay for spring-training facilities. The statute has no process allowing OTTED to decertify local governments without spring training baseball teams and return any unencumbered state funds.

This bill:

- Requires OTTED and local governments certified after the date of this act to enter into contracts before receiving the state funds.
- Includes provisions for OTTED to decertify and recover state funds from local governments whose spring training franchises have relocated.
- Creates an opportunity for currently certified local governments that have lost their teams to recruit new franchises, before they are decertified by OTTED and return state funds.
- Expands the scope of the incentive – currently restricted to “retained” spring training franchises that were based in Florida prior to 2000 – to include any spring training franchise. This allows the incentive to be used by local communities to attract Arizona-based teams to Florida, should additional state funding become available.
- Requires all certified local governments with spring training teams to annually report on how the state funds are being used and the economic impacts of the teams.
- Directs OTTED and its partners to develop a strategic plan to help guide the future of spring training baseball in Florida.
- Specifies that previously certified local governments that have encumbered their state funds for spring training facilities will not be required to reimburse the state, nor be decertified.
- Updates s. 288.1162, F.S., related to state certification for professional sports franchises, and removes all references to spring training baseball facilities, and creates s. 288.11621, F.S., specifically for the certification of local governments for the purposes of receiving state funding for spring training baseball.
- Amends s. 288.1229, F.S., to allow the Florida Sports Foundation to provide assistance to OTTED in the retention of spring-training baseball and other professional sports franchises.
- Provides that an agreement to relocate a spring training baseball team from one local governmental entity to another shall be recognized as a valid agreement so long as OTTED approves the continuing release of funds to the local government that the franchise is relocated to before the effective date of this act. It also establishes legislative recognition of the validity of these agreements that were in effect before the effective date of this act.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 116-0