

Careers & Workforce Subcommittee

Tuesday, January 20, 2026
3:30 PM
Morris Hall (17 HOB)

Daniel Perez
Speaker

Tiffany Esposito
Chair

Committee Meeting Notice

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Careers & Workforce Subcommittee

Start Date and Time: Tuesday, January 20, 2026 03:30 PM

End Date and Time: Tuesday, January 20, 2026 05:30 PM

Location: Morris Hall (17 HOB)

Duration: 2.00 hrs

Consideration of the following bill(s):

HB 1115 Grants for Genetic Counseling Education by Anderson

Consideration of the following proposed committee substitute(s):

PCS for HB 325 -- Education and Workforce Development for Inmates
PCS for HB 753 -- School Counselors
PCS for HB 1081 -- Cybersecurity Internships

NOTICE FINALIZED on 01/15/2026 4:46PM by Kelley.Megan

HB 1115

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
BILL ANALYSIS

This bill analysis was prepared by nonpartisan committee staff and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.

BILL #: HB 1115	**COMPANION BILL:** SB 1376 (Burgess)
TITLE: Grants for Genetic Counseling Education	**LINKED BILLS:** None
SPONSOR(S): Anderson	**RELATED BILLS:** None

Committee References

Careers & Workforce ➤ Higher Education Budget ➤ Education & Employment

SUMMARY

Effect of the Bill:
The bill creates the Genetic Counseling Education Enhancement Grant Program (program) within the State University System to support the development, growth, and sustainability of graduate genetic counseling programs accredited by the American Board of Genetic Counseling (ABGC). The bill requires the Board of Governors (BOG) to award competitive grants to state universities to address faculty shortages, student financial barriers, and clinical training needs. Grants may be awarded to establish new programs or support existing programs based on performance, including student completion and first-time board certification passage rates, and the program is designed to reward programs with above-average national certification results.

The bill requires grant funds to be used for recruiting and retaining faculty, providing scholarships to students, and establishing clinical rotations with healthcare partners. Funds may not be used for general administrative costs, facility construction, or unrelated activities. The bill requires universities receiving grants to maintain records of compliance and submit annual reports to the BOG, which will compile a statewide summary for submission to the Governor and Legislature. The BOG is also required to adopt regulations to administer the program.

Fiscal or Economic Impact:
Funding for the program is contingent upon legislative appropriation. The bill designates the BOG as the entity responsible for administering the competitive grant program for state universities, including developing application criteria, reviewing and awarding grants, and collecting and compiling programmatic data. The BOG may incur administrative costs associated with these duties; however, such costs are expected to be minimal and are anticipated to be absorbed within existing resources.

JUMP TO SUMMARY ANALYSIS RELEVANT INFORMATION BILL HISTORY

ANALYSIS

EFFECT OF THE BILL:

The bill creates the Genetic Counseling Education Enhancement Grant Program (program) within the State University System (SUS) to support the development, growth, and sustainability of graduate level genetic counseling programs accredited by the American Board of Genetic Counseling (ABGC).

The bill requires the Board of Governors (BOG) to award competitive grants to state universities to address faculty shortages, student financial barriers, and clinical training needs in genetic counseling.

The BOG is required to award funds to:

- Establish an accredited program at a state university through a one-time start-up grant based upon an application submitted in a format prescribed by the BOG. The application must include:
  - A detailed plan demonstrating how grant funds will be used to achieve program accreditation.
  - The projected outcomes of establishing the program, including all of the following:
    - The anticipated program enrollment.
    - The plan for hiring and retaining faculty for the program.

    - The anticipated program completion rates.
    - The anticipated first-time American Board of Genetic Counseling board certification examination passage rates.
    - The anticipated program contributions to the state's genetic counseling workforce.

- Accredited programs based on program performance according to the following metrics:
    - The number of students completing the genetic counseling program.
    - The first-time American Board of Genetic Counseling board certification examination passage rate for students completing the state university's genetic counseling program.

The bill requires the program to reward excellence among genetic counseling programs with an average first-time ABGC board certification examination passage rate above the national average.

Under the bill, grant funds provided through the program must be used for:

- The recruitment and retention of qualified faculty, including, but not limited to, salaries, professional development, and incentives.
- Financial assistance to students enrolled in the accredited program. Such financial assistance must be in the form of scholarships that cover tuition, required books and materials, and reasonable living expenses.
- The establishment and maintenance of clinical rotations required for completion of the master's degree in genetic counseling, including partnerships with health care facilities for supervised practicum experiences, simulation training resources, and faculty oversight.

The bill specifies that grant funds may not be used for:

- General administrative overhead costs.
- The construction of new facilities.
- Nonprogram-related activities.

State universities awarded a grant under the program must maintain records demonstrating compliance with program requirements.

The bill requires each state university receiving grant funds from the program to submit an annual report to the BOG. The report must include:

- Expenditures.
- The outcomes achieved using grant funds.
- Plans for the upcoming fiscal year for the program.

The bill also requires the board to annually compile the reports into a statewide summary. The summary must be submitted to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by July 1 of each year.

The bill requires the BOG to adopt regulations to administer the program. (Section 1).

The effective date of the bill is July 1, 2026. (Section 2).

FISCAL OR ECONOMIC IMPACT:

STATE GOVERNMENT:

Funding for the program is contingent upon legislative appropriation. The bill designates the BOG as the entity responsible for administering the competitive grant program for state universities, including developing application criteria, reviewing and awarding grants, and collecting and compiling programmatic data. The BOG may incur administrative costs associated with these duties; however, such costs are expected to be minimal and are anticipated to be absorbed within existing resources. (Section 1).

RELEVANT INFORMATION

SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

Genetic Disorders

Genetic disorders are health conditions caused by abnormalities in an individual's genetic material, including mutations in one or more genes or structural changes in chromosomes. These conditions may be inherited from one or both parents or may occur spontaneously. Genetic disorders vary widely in severity and may affect physical health, development, or disease susceptibility across the lifespan.[1] Examples of genetic disorders include down syndrome, Alzheimer's disease, cancer, cystic fibrosis, and sickle cell disease.[2]

Genetic Counseling

Genetic counseling is a healthcare service that supports the identification and management of genetic disorders. A genetic counselor is a licensed professional who provides this service. Genetic counseling includes advising individuals or families affected by, or at risk for, genetic disorders, and may involve:[3]

- Obtaining and evaluating individual, family, and medical histories to determine genetic risk for genetic or medical conditions and diseases in a patient, his or her offspring, and other family members;
- Discussing the features, natural history, means of diagnosis, genetic and environmental factors, and management of risk for genetic or medical conditions and diseases;
- Identifying, ordering, and coordinating genetic laboratory tests and other diagnostic studies as appropriate for a genetic assessment;
- Integrating genetic laboratory test results and other diagnostic studies with personal and family medical history to assess and communicate risk factors for genetic or medical conditions and diseases;
- Explaining the clinical implications of genetic laboratory tests and other diagnostic studies and their results;
- Evaluating the client's or family's responses to the condition or risk of recurrence and providing client-centered counseling and anticipatory guidance;
- Identifying and using community resources that provide medical, educational, financial, and psychosocial support and advocacy;
- Providing written documentation of medical, genetic, and counseling information for families and health care professionals; and
- Referring patients to a physician for diagnosis and treatment.

Genetic counselors practice across multiple specialties, including prenatal, pediatric, oncology, neurology, ophthalmology, psychiatry, and related clinical fields.[4] Since 1999, the profession has grown significantly. As of March 2023, there were 6,517 certified genetic counselors in the United States. The profession has grown by over 100 percent in the last ten years and is expected to grow another 100 percent over the next ten years.[5]

Genetic Counseling Accreditation

In the United States, genetic counselors must complete a graduate-level genetic counseling program accredited by

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[1] NIH, National Human Genome Research, Genetic Disorders, https://www.genome.gov/For-Patients-and-Families/Genetic-Disorders (last visited Jan. 13, 2026)
[2] Cleveland Clinic, Genetic Disorders, https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/21751-genetic-disorders (last visited Jan. 14, 2026).
[3] Section 483.913(2)-(3), F.S.
[4] National Society of Genetic Counselors, *About Genetic Counselors*, https://www.nsgc.org/About/About-Genetic-Counselors (last visited Jan. 13, 2026).
[5] National Society of Genetic Counselors, *Executive Summary*, *available at* https://www.nsgc.org/Portals/0/2023%20PSS%20Executive%20Summary.pdf.

the Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling (ACGC).[6] Graduation from an accredited program is required to sit for the certification examination administered by the American Board of Genetic Counseling (ABGC).[7] The ABGC certification process establishes national professional standards and assesses competency in areas such as genetics and genomics expertise, risk assessment, counseling, communication, healthcare systems, and professional identity.[8]

Florida law is consistent with these national standards. To be licensed as a genetic counselor in Florida, an applicant must hold a master's degree from a genetic counseling training program accredited by the ACGC, or an equivalent program, or a doctoral degree from a medical genetics training program accredited by the American Board of Medical Genetics and Genomics (ABMGG) or the Canadian College of Medical Geneticists(CCMG).[9] Applicants must also pass a recognized certification examination administered by the ABGC, the ABMGG, or the Canadian Association of Genetic Counsellors (CAGC).[10] Florida law also authorizes the Department of Health to issue a temporary license to applicants who meet all licensure requirements except passage of the certification examination and who are eligible to sit for that examination.[11]

As of December of 2024, there were 63 ACGC-accredited genetic counseling programs across the United States and Canada, with a total enrollment of 1,164 students.[12] The University of South Florida is currently the only university in Florida offering a Genetic Counseling program.[13] Florida State University plans to launch its program in Fall 2027.[14] The University of Florida is the only university in Florida offering graduate-level PhD programs in genetics and genomics.[15]

RECENT LEGISLATION:

YEAR	BILL #/SUBJECT	HOUSE/*SENATE* SPONSOR(S)	OTHER INFORMATION
2021	CS/SB 1770 - Genetic Counseling	Silvers/ *Jones*	Became Law on July 1, 2021

[6] Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling, *Get Accredited*, https://www.gceducation.org/get-accredited/ (last visited Jan. 14, 2026).
[7] American Board of Genetic Counseling, *About the CGC Credential*, https://www.abgc.net/Certify/About-the-CGC-Credential (last visited Jan. 13, 2026).
[8] Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling, *Practice-Based Competencies for Genetic Counselors*, at 2-5, *available at* https://www.nsgc.org/Portals/0/Docs/Education/ACGC-Core-Competencies-Brochure_15_Web.pdf.
[9] Section 483.914(2)(d), F.S. *See also*, ACGC, *About Us*, https://www.gceducation.org/about-us/ (last visited Jan. 14, 2026). The Canadian Association of Genetic Counselors is a partner organization with the ACGC.
[10] Section 483.914(2)(e), F.S.
[11] Section 483.914(3), F.S.
[12] Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling, *ACGC Annual Accreditation Report*, *available at* https://www.gceducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/ACGC-2024-Annual-Report.pdf.
[13] USF Health, College of Public Health, *MSPH with a Concentration in Genetic Counseling*, https://health.usf.edu/publichealth/apply/masters/msph-gc (last visited Jan. 13, 2026). *See also*, ACGC, *Find a Program*, https://www.gceducation.org/find-a-program/ (last visited Jan. 13, 2026).
[14] Florida State University, College of Medicine, *Master's in Genetic Counseling*, https://med.fsu.edu/iprd/masters-degree-program-genetic-counseling (last visited Jan. 13, 2026).
[15] University of Florida, *Genetics and Genomics, Program Information*, https://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/graduate/colleges-departments/liberal-arts-sciences/interdisciplinary-department/genetics-genomics/ (last visited Jan. 14, 2026).

BILL HISTORY

COMMITTEE REFERENCE	ACTION	DATE	STAFF DIRECTOR/ POLICY CHIEF	ANALYSIS PREPARED BY
Careers & Workforce Subcommittee			Kiner	Dixon
Higher Education Budget Subcommittee				
Education & Employment Committee				

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to the grants for genetic counseling education; creating s. 1009.8963, F.S.; creating the Genetic Counseling Education Enhancement Grant Program within the State University System; providing the purpose of the program; subject to legislative appropriation, requiring the Board of Governors to award grant funds to state universities for specified purposes; requiring the program to reward excellence among genetic counseling programs based on specified criteria; providing authorized uses of grant funds; prohibiting such funds from being used for specified purposes; requiring state universities participating in the program to maintain specified records; requiring such state universities to submit an annual report; requiring the Board of Governors to submit an annual summary of such reports to the Governor and Legislature by a specified date; requiring the Board of Governors to adopt regulations; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Section 1009.8963, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

CODING: Words ~~stricken~~ are deletions; words underlined are additions.

1009.8963 The Genetic Counseling Education Enhancement Grant Program.—

(1) The Genetic Counseling Education Enhancement Grant Program is created within the State University System to support the development, growth, and sustainability of graduate level genetic counseling programs accredited by the American Board of Genetic Counseling. The Board of Governors shall award competitive grants to state universities to address faculty shortages, student financial barriers, and clinical training needs in genetic counseling.

(2) Subject to appropriation, the board shall award funds to:

(a) Establish an accredited program at a state university through a one-time start-up grant based upon an application submitted in a format prescribed by the board. The application must include:

1. A detailed plan demonstrating how grant funds will be used to achieve program accreditation.

2. The projected outcomes of establishing the program, including all of the following:

a. The anticipated program enrollment.

b. The plan for hiring and retaining faculty for the program.

c. The anticipated program completion rates.

d. The anticipated first-time American Board of Genetic

Counseling board certification examination passage rates.

e. The anticipated program contributions to the state's genetic counseling workforce.

(b) Accredited programs based on program performance according to the following metrics:

1. The number of students completing the genetic counseling program.

2. The first-time American Board of Genetic Counseling board certification examination passage rate for students completing the state university's genetic counseling program.

The program shall reward excellence among genetic counseling programs with an average first-time American Board of Genetic Counseling board certification examination passage rate above the national average.

(3)(a) Grant funds provided through the program must be used for:

1. The recruitment and retention of qualified faculty, including, but not limited to, salaries, professional development, and incentives.

2. Financial assistance to students enrolled in the accredited program. Such financial assistance must be in the form of scholarships that cover tuition, required books and materials, and reasonable living expenses.

3. The establishment and maintenance of clinical rotations

required for completion of the master's degree in genetic counseling, including partnerships with health care facilities for supervised practicum experiences, simulation training resources, and faculty oversight.

(b) Grant funds may not be used for:

1. General administrative overhead costs.

2. The construction of new facilities.

3. Nonprogram-related activities.

(c) State universities that receive a grant through the program must maintain records sufficient to demonstrate compliance with this subsection.

(4)(a) Each state university receiving funds pursuant to this section shall submit an annual report to the board. The report must include:

1. Expenditures.

2. The outcomes achieved using grant funds.

3. Plans for the upcoming fiscal year for the program.

(b) The board shall annually compile the reports into a statewide summary. The summary must be submitted to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by July 1 of each year.

(5) The Board of Governors shall adopt regulations to administer this section.

Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.

COMMITTEE/SUBCOMMITTEE ACTION

ADOPTED	____	(Y/N)
ADOPTED AS AMENDED	____	(Y/N)
ADOPTED W/O OBJECTION	____	(Y/N)
FAILED TO ADOPT	____	(Y/N)
WITHDRAWN	____	(Y/N)
OTHER		

Committee/Subcommittee hearing bill: Careers & Workforce Subcommittee

Representative Anderson offered the following:

Amendment

Remove lines 31-53 and insert:

genetic counseling programs accredited by the Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling. The Board of Governors shall award competitive grants to state universities to address faculty shortages, student financial barriers, and clinical training needs in genetic counseling.

(2) Subject to appropriation, the board shall award funds to:

(a) Establish an accredited program at a state university through a one-time start-up grant based upon an application

submitted in a format prescribed by the board. The application must include:

1. A detailed plan demonstrating how grant funds will be used to achieve program accreditation.

2. The projected outcomes of establishing the program, including all of the following:

a. The anticipated program enrollment.

b. The plan for hiring and retaining faculty for the program.

c. The anticipated program completion rates.

d. The anticipated first-time American Board of Genetic Counseling board certification examination passage rates.

e. The anticipated program contributions to the state's genetic counseling workforce.

3. Documentation demonstrating that the proposed program is supported by sufficient clinical training capacity consistent with nationally recognized accreditation standards, and that the proposed growth represents a net increase in statewide training opportunities rather than a redistribution of existing supervision resources.

PCS For HB 325

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
BILL ANALYSIS

This bill analysis was prepared by nonpartisan committee staff and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.

BILL #: PCS for HB 325	**COMPANION BILL:** SB 1300 (Calatayud)
TITLE: Education and Workforce Development for Inmates	**LINKED BILLS:** None
SPONSOR(S):	**RELATED BILLS:** None

Committee References

Orig. Comm.: Careers & Workforce

SUMMARY

Effect of the Bill:
The proposed committee substitute (PCS) expands current commercial driver license (CDL) training programs operated or contracted by the Department of Corrections (DOC). Specifically, the PCS removes a barrier limiting DOC CDL training to work-release inmates by allowing for nonviolent inmates with two years or less remaining on their sentence to enroll in CDL training conducted "behind the fence" at state correctional institutions and facilities. To facilitate this, the PCS allows an inmate to operate a state-owned vehicle on department or other state-owned property – provided a certified correctional officer is present. Operation of the vehicle would be strictly for CDL training purposes. The PCS also clarifies the mission of the Florida Transportation Academy (FTA). Specifically, the PCS requires the FTA's programs include Class A and Class B CDL training opportunities.

The PCS requires inmates be proficient in English in order to enroll in CDL training programs offered or contracted by DOC or the FTA.

Fiscal or Economic Impact:
The PCS is not expected to have a fiscal impact on state agencies beyond existing resources. Florida Department of Transportation may implement broader workforce development programs within current funding limitations, and DOC may expand CTE and CDL training programs using existing resources. Any additional workload from reporting requirements is expected to be minimal and absorbable within current resources.

JUMP TO SUMMARY ANALYSIS RELEVANT INFORMATION BILL HISTORY

ANALYSIS

EFFECT OF THE BILL:

The bill expands the scope of career and technical education (CTE) programs authorized under the Correctional Education Program (CEP) that may be implemented and offered at state correctional institutions and correctional facilities. In addition to existing authority to establish a prison entrepreneurship program and a firefighter training and certification program, the bill authorizes the development and implementation of a CTE curriculum to train and license inmates to operate commercial motor vehicles.

The bill specifies that the commercial motor vehicle CTE curriculum must include training for Class A and Class B driver licenses and limits participation in the program to nonviolent inmates who have two years or less remaining to serve on their sentence. To be eligible to enroll in a Class A or Class B commercial driver license training program offered through the CEP, the bill requires an inmate be proficient in English. Such proficiency may be demonstrated in a manner specified by the Department of Corrections (DOC) or the DOC's designee.

The bill also specifies annual reporting requirements of the CEP. Specifically, the bill requires the annual report of correctional education activities to include:

- The number of inmates who completed CTE training, the type of training each inmate completed, and the credential each inmate earned through the Correctional Education Program;

- The number of inmates who completed CTE training and were employed within six months after release; and
- Statistics indicating whether employed former inmates are working in occupations aligned with the education and training they received through the program. (Section 3).

The bill creates a limited exception to the prohibition against inmates driving state-owned vehicles. Under the bill, an inmate appropriately licensed and trained may drive a state-owned vehicle if he or she is enrolled in, or a completer of, a department-operated or a contracted commercial driver license training program. An inmate may only operate a state-owned vehicle on DOC property or other state-owned property specifically designated for commercial driver license training purposes. At least one certified correctional officer must be present during such operation. (Section 5).

The bill also expands the circumstances under which an inmate may be transported in a state-owned vehicle. Specifically, the department may transport an appropriately licensed inmate who is enrolled in, or a completer of, a department-operated or contracted commercial driver license program for the purpose of completing program requirements or demonstrating proficiency. At least one certified correctional officer must be present during such transport or operation. (Section 4).

The bill broadens the authority of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to expend funds, in consultation with affected stakeholders, for a workforce development program, rather than a construction workforce development program, for delivery of projects designated in the FDOT's work program.

From the FDOT's annual expenditure of up to $5 million from the State Transportation Trust Fund for grants, the bill expands the recipients to include private educational providers, in addition to state colleges and school districts. The bill also expands the authorization for the use of grant funds to include funding for certification and training opportunities within the Florida Transportation Academy, in addition to the purchase of equipment simulators with authentic original equipment manufacturer controls and companion curriculum, instructional aids, and support for an elective course in heavy civil construction, including OSHA 10-hour and equipment simulator certifications. (Section 1).

The bill expands the Florida Transportation Academy's certification and training programs to include nonviolent inmates who have two years or less remaining on their sentence, in addition to nonviolent, scheduled-release inmates. The bill also specifies that such certification and training opportunities for eligible inmates must:

- be offered at state correctional institutions and correctional facilities; and
- at a minimum, include training for Class A and Class B commercial driver licenses.

To be eligible to enroll in a Class A or Class B CDL training program offered through the Florida Transportation Academy, the bill requires an inmate be proficient in English. Such proficiency may be demonstrated in a manner specified by the FDOT or the department's designee.

Additionally, the bill authorizes the FDOT to use workforce development funds from the State Transportation Trust Fund[1] to support these certifications and training programs. (Section 2).

The effective date of the bill is July 1, 2026. (Section 6).

RELEVANT INFORMATION

SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

Truck Driver Shortage

[1] *See* s. 334.044(35), F.S.

The United States continues to experience a persistent shortage of commercial truck drivers, with industry estimates indicating a shortfall in the tens of thousands of positions. In 2025, estimates placed the gap at more than 80,000 drivers, and projections suggest that long-term demand will require over 1.2 million new drivers over the next decade to replace retirees and keep pace with freight growth.[2] The shortage is driven in part by an aging workforce, high annual turnover, and challenges in attracting younger workers and addressing training barriers.[3]

Florida's labor market for CDL-A truck drivers includes an estimated 16,000+ job openings statewide.[4] State-level workforce development programs, including state colleges and district career centers, have highlighted the need for expanded training opportunities to address the shortage.[5]

Requirements to Obtain a CDL

Federal law establishes minimum qualification standards for individuals operating commercial motor vehicles and motor carriers are prohibited from permitting unqualified individuals to drive.[6]

To be qualified, a commercial driver must, among other requirements:[7]

- be at least 21 years old[8];
- be able to read and speak the English language sufficiently to communicate with the general public, understand traffic signs and signals, respond to official inquiries, and accurately complete required reports and records; and
- have the training, experience, or both, necessary to safely operate the type of commercial motor vehicle driven.

Drivers must also meet federal physical qualification standards, hold a valid commercial driver license issued by only one jurisdiction, not be subject to federal disqualification, and have successfully completed a road skills test or an equivalent licensing requirement accepted by the employing motor carrier.[9]

In Florida, CDLs are issued in three primary classes based on the type and weight of vehicle to be operated:[10]

- Class A licenses allow operation of any combination vehicle, such as e.g., tractor-trailers, with a gross vehicle weight rating of 26,001 pounds or more when the towed vehicle weighs more than 10,000 pounds;
- Class B licenses allow operation of a single vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating of 26,001 pounds or more; and
- Class C licenses allow operation of vehicles not covered by Class A or B that either transport a specified number of passengers or hazardous materials.

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[2] TruckClub, *Trucking's Driver Shortage: What's Behind It and How the Industry is Responding* (Sept. 2025), https://www.truckclub.com/trucking-news/driver-shortage-in-trucking (last visited Jan. 12, 2026).
[3] Freight Amigo, *The Ongoing US Truck Driver shortage: Impacts & Adaptions 2025*, https://www.freightamigo.com/en/blog/logistics/the-ongoing-truck-driver-shortage-in-the-us-impacts-and-adaptations/ (last visited Jan. 12, 2026).
[4] Florida Educator Preparation & Leadership Network 2025 Convening, *Florida' Labor Market Needs: CDL-A Truck Drivers*, at 33, *available at* https://www.fau.edu/education/academicdepartments/el/school-leaders/initiatives/leadership-learning-center/fepln/convening/2025-convening-presentation/documents/fepln-2025-day-1-ppt.pdf.
[5] Spectrum News, Pinellas Technical College aims to bridge female truck driver gap, reduce storage, https://baynews9.com/fl/tampa/news/2023/06/08/pinellas-technical-college-aims-to-bridge-female-truck-driver-gap--reduce-shortage (last visited Jan. 12, 2026).
[6] 49 C.F.R. § 391.11(a).
[7] 49 C.F.R. § 391.11(b)(1)-(3).
[8] An individual who is at least 18 years of age, but younger than 21, is restricted to intrastate operation only. https://www.flhsmv.gov/driver-licenses-id-cards/commercial-motor-vehicle-drivers/commercial-driver-license/ (last visited Jan. 15, 2026). *See also*, 49 C.F.R. § 383.71(a). A Commercial Learner's Permit can be issued to a person 18 years of age or older.
[9] 49 C.F.R. § 391.11(b)(4)-(7)
[10] Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, License Classes, Endorsements & Designations, https://www.flhsmv.gov/driver-licenses-id-cards/general-information/license-classes-endorsements-designations/ (last visited Jan. 12, 2026).

Florida law prohibits the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles from issuing a driver license to a person who is an unauthorized alien or undocumented immigrant.[11]

Department of Corrections Commercial Driver's License Training Opportunities

As part of broader workforce development efforts, vocational and pre-release programs may provide training related to CDLs. In Florida, workforce initiatives such as Florida HIRES, which involves CareerSource Florida and the DOC, have included training opportunities for in-demand occupations, including Class B commercial truck driving.[12] The Florida HIRES program currently operates at Kissimmee Community Release Center (Kissimmee CRC). Female inmates from Orlando Community Release Center that are eligible for the program are provided daily transport to and from Kissimmee CRC to participate in the program. Cohorts typically take 6 weeks to complete. The program is contracted for 5 cohorts for fiscal year 2025-2026, serving 75 total inmates for Class B CDLs.[13]

Through contract with Tallahassee State College, the DOC currently operates a Class A CDL program for work release inmates at Tallahassee Community Release Center. The 320-hour course is completed in over 8 weeks. The program is contracted for 2 cohorts for fiscal year 2025-2026, serving 16 total inmates.[14]

Education for State Prisoners

The Bureau of Workforce Development within the DOC offers CTE programs throughout the state's correctional institutions and work camps.[15] Currently, the DOC provides 92 CTE courses in 37 distinct vocational trades spanning 11 career clusters aligned to Florida's in-demand occupations. Expansion of programs has been achieved through contracted education partners, including state colleges, technical colleges, and community providers. Technical training, employability skill development, and industry-recognized credentialing are integrated into the CTE programs to ensure returning citizens are job-ready upon release.[16]

As part of these efforts, the DOC operates the CEP, which manages educational services in all state correctional facilities. The CEP develops, evaluates, and periodically updates CTE programs based on labor market demand and workforce needs.[17] In addition to curriculum development and evaluation, the CEP must annually report correctional education activities to the Secretary of Corrections.[18] Current law does not specify the data elements that must be included in the report.

The CEP is authorized to establish specialized educational programs for inmates, including prison entrepreneurship programs and workforce certifications, and to adopt procedures for admitting student inmates. Programs may include in-prison education, development of business plans, graduation and certification of successful student inmates, and post release transitional or continuing education services. The DOC may implement programs in partnership with public or private colleges or universities, nonprofit organizations, or other authorized providers using existing resources.[19]

Additionally, the CEP may work with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Florida Forest Service Division, and the Department of Financial Services, Division of State Fire Marshal to develop certifications

[11] Section 322.033, F.S.
[12] Florida Daily, CareerSource Florida, *Department of Corrections Honor Graduates of Commercial Driver License Program* (Feb. 2022), https://floridadaily.com/careersource-florida-department-of-corrections-honor-graduates-of-commercial-driver-license-program/#google_vignette (last visited Jan. 12, 2026).
[13] Florida Department of Corrections, Agency Analysis of 2026 House Bill 325, p. 2 (Nov. 21, 2025).
[14] *Id*.
[15] Florida Department of Corrections, *Bureau of Workforce Development*, https://www.fdc.myflorida.com/programs/bureau-of-workforce-development (last visited Jan. 12, 2026).
[16] *Id*.
[17] Section 944.801(1), (2), and 3(h) F.S.
[18] Section 944.801(3)(f), F.S.
[19] Section 944.801(5), F.S.

and training programs, such as state forest staff training to protect homes, forestland, and natural resources from wildfires.[20]

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)

The FDOT has several general powers and duties, including expending funds for a construction workforce development program, in consultation with affected stakeholders, for delivery of projects designated in the department's work program.[21] The FDOT may annually expend up to $5 million from the State Transportation Trust Fund for fiscal years 2025-2026 through 2029-2030 in grants to state colleges and school districts, with priority given to state colleges and school districts in counties that are rural communities.[22] These funds may be used for:

- the purchase of equipment simulators with authentic original equipment manufacturer controls and a companion curriculum;
- the purchase of instructional aids for use in conjunction with the equipment simulators; and
- supporting offering an elective course in heavy civil construction which must, at a minimum, provide the student with:
  - Occupational Safety and Health Administration 10-hour certification; and
  - fill equipment simulator certification.[23]

Florida Transportation Academy

In 2025, the Florida Legislature codified the Florida Transportation Academy[24] to prioritize the continued need for transportation industry workforce development programs. To support, promote, and sustain workforce development efforts in the transportation sector, the FDOT has the authority to coordinate with various entities,[25] including the DOC. Coordination with the DOC is intended to identify and create certification and training opportunities for nonviolent inmates and to establish a process for notifying the FDOT when a nonviolent inmate who is seeking employment has a scheduled release date.[26]

Inmate Transportation in Work-Released Program

An inmate is prohibited from driving a state-owned vehicle for the purpose of transporting other inmates who are participating in a work-release program that allows inmates to be gainfully employed in the community while remaining in the custody and supervision of the DOC.[27] Due to this prohibition and the required knowledge and skills tests, commercial vehicle driving programs are only offered to inmates housed at Work Release Centers, where testing and training facilities are available. Both Class A and Class B licenses require knowledge exams and skills tests, including pre-trip inspection, basic vehicle control, and on-road driving.[28]

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[20] Section 944.801(6), F.S.
[21] Section 334.044(35), F.S.
[22] *See* s. 288.0656(2), F.S. A rural community means a county with a population of 75,000 or fewer; a county with a population of 125,000 or fewer which is contiguous to a county with a population of 75,000 or fewer; a municipality within a county described Florida statute; or an unincorporated federal enterprise community or an incorporated rural city with a population of 25,000 or fewer and an employment base focused on traditional agricultural or resource-based industries, located in a county not defined as rural, which has at least three or more of the economic distress factors identified Florida statute and verified by the department.
[23] Section 334.044(35), F.S.
[24] Section 25, ch. 2025-155, L.O.F. *See also*, Florida Department of Transportation, *Florida Transportation Academy Construction Division*, https://movingi4forward.com/workforce-development-landing-page/ (last visited Jan. 9, 2026).
[25] *See* s. 334.62, F.S. The FDOT may coordinate with the Department of Corrections, the Department of Juvenile Justice, veteran's organizations, the Department of Commerce, CareerSource Florida, regional business communities, the American Council of Engineering Companies, and the Florida Transportation Builders Association.
[26] Section 334.62(1), F.S.
[27] Section 945.0913, F.S.; *see also* s. 945.091(1)(b), F.S. and rule 33-601.605(9)9a), F.A.C.
[28] Florida Department of Corrections, Agency Analysis of 2026 House Bill 325, pp. 2-3 (Nov. 21, 2025).

RECENT LEGISLATION:

YEAR	BILL #/SUBJECT	HOUSE/*SENATE* SPONSOR(S)	OTHER INFORMATION
2025	CS/CS/CS/SB 462 - Transportation	McFarland/ *DiCeglie*	Became law on July 1, 2025, except where otherwise provided.
2025	CS/CS/CS/SB 1662 - Transportation	Abbott, Bankson/ *Collins*	Became law on July 1, 2025.

BILL HISTORY

COMMITTEE REFERENCE	ACTION	DATE	STAFF DIRECTOR/ POLICY CHIEF	ANALYSIS PREPARED BY
Orig. Comm.: Careers & Workforce Subcommittee			Kiner	Dixon

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to education and workforce development for inmates; amending s. 334.044, F.S.; authorizing the Department of Transportation to expend certain funds for all workforce development programs, rather than only construction workforce development programs; authorizing the department to provide grants to private educational providers to use for certain certification and training opportunities; amending s. 334.62, F.S.; requiring certification and training opportunities to include training for specified commercial driver licenses to certain inmates; authorizing the department to use workforce development funds for certain certification and training opportunities; amending s. 944.801, F.S.; requiring the Correctional Education Program under the Department of Corrections to annually submit a report to the Secretary of Corrections with specified information; authorizing the Correctional Education Program to implement a career and technical education curriculum in which certain inmates can earn specified commercial driver licenses; amending s. 945.091, F.S.; conforming a provision to changes made by the act; amending s. 945.0913, F.S.; authorizing inmates to drive a state-owned vehicle under certain

circumstances; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Subsection (35) of section 334.044, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

334.044 Powers and duties of the department.—The department shall have the following general powers and duties:

(35) To expend funds for a ~~construction~~ workforce development program, in consultation with affected stakeholders, for delivery of projects designated in the department's work program. The department may annually expend up to $5 million from the State Transportation Trust Fund for fiscal years 2025-2026 through 2029-2030 in grants to state colleges, ~~and~~ school districts, and private educational providers, with priority given to state colleges and school districts in counties that are rural communities as defined in s. 288.0656(2), for certification and training opportunities within the Florida Transportation Academy, for the purchase of equipment simulators with authentic original equipment manufacturer controls and a companion curriculum, for the purchase of instructional aids for use in conjunction with the equipment simulators, and to support offering an elective course in heavy civil construction which must, at a minimum, provide the student with an Occupational Safety and Health Administration 10-hour certification and a

fill equipment simulator certification.

Section 2. Subsection (1) of section 334.62, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

334.62 Florida Transportation Academy.—The Legislature finds that the growth and sustainability of the transportation industry workforce is vital to the continued success and efficiency of the state's supply chain and economic competitiveness. In order to prioritize the continued need for transportation industry workforce development programs, the Florida Transportation Academy is established within the department. In order to support, promote, and sustain workforce development efforts in the transportation sector, the department may do all of the following:

(1) Coordinate with the Department of Corrections to identify and create certification and training opportunities for nonviolent, scheduled-release inmates and inmates who have 2 years or less remaining on their sentence and create a notification process between the Department of Corrections and the department for nonviolent inmates with imminent scheduled-release dates who are expected to seek employment upon release. Such certification and training opportunities must be offered at state correctional institutions and correctional facilities, and at minimum, include training for Class A and Class B commercial driver licenses. To be eligible to enroll in a Class A or Class B commercial driver license training program offered in

accordance with this subsection, an inmate must be proficient in English. Such proficiency may be demonstrated in a manner specified by the department or the department's designee. The department's workforce development funds as described in s. 334.044(35) may be used to fund such certification and training opportunities.

Section 3. Subsections (7), (8), and (9) of section 944.801, Florida Statutes, are renumbered as subsections (6), (7), and (8), respectively, and paragraphs (a), (e), and (g) through (j) of subsection (3) and subsection (5) and present subsections (6) and (7) of that section are amended, to read:

944.801 Education for state prisoners.—

(3) The responsibilities of the Correctional Education Program shall be to:

(a) Develop guidelines for collecting education-related information during the inmate reception process and for disseminating such information to the classification staff of the Department of Corrections. The information collected shall include the inmate's areas of educational or career and technical educational ~~vocational~~ interest, ~~vocational~~ skills, and level of education.

(e) Enter into agreements with public or private school districts, entities, state ~~community~~ colleges, ~~junior colleges, colleges,~~ or universities as may be deemed appropriate for the purpose of carrying out its duties and responsibilities and

ensure that agreements require minimum performance standards and standards for measurable objectives, in accordance with established Department of Education standards.

(g) Develop and maintain complete and reliable statistics on the number of high school equivalency diplomas and career and technical education ~~vocational~~ certificates issued by each institution in each skill area, the change in inmate literacy levels, and the number of inmate admissions to and withdrawals from education courses. The compiled statistics shall be summarized and analyzed in the annual report of correctional education activities required by paragraph (f).

(h) Develop a written procedure for selecting programs to add to or delete from the career and technical education ~~vocational~~ curriculum. The procedure shall include labor market analyses that demonstrate the projected demand for certain occupations and the projected supply of potential employees. In conducting these analyses, the department shall evaluate the feasibility of adding career and technical ~~vocational~~ education programs that have been identified by the Department of Commerce, the Department of Education, or a regional coordinating council as being in undersupply in this state. The department shall periodically reevaluate the career and technical ~~vocational~~ education programs in major institutions to determine which of the programs support and provide relevant skills to inmates who could be assigned to a correctional work

program that is operated as a Prison Industry Enhancement Program. The annual report of correctional education activities required under paragraph (f) must include all of the following information:

1. The number of inmates who completed career and technical education training, the type of training each inmate completed, and the credential each inmate earned through the Correctional Education Program.

2. The number of inmates who completed career and technical education training through the Correctional Education Program and were employed within 6 months after being released from prison.

3. Statistics on whether the employed former inmates who completed training through the Correctional Education Program are employed in an occupation aligned with their education and training received through the Correctional Education Program.

(i) Ensure that every inmate who has 2 years or more remaining to serve on his or her sentence at the time that he or she is received at an institution and who lacks basic and functional literacy skills as defined in s. 1004.02 attends not fewer than 150 hours of sequential instruction in a correctional adult basic education program. The basic and functional literacy level of an inmate shall be determined by the average composite test score obtained on a test approved for this purpose by the State Board of Education.

1. Upon completion of the 150 hours of instruction, the inmate shall be retested and, if a composite test score of functional literacy is not attained, the department is authorized to require the inmate to remain in the instructional program.

2. Highest priority of inmate participation shall be focused on youthful offenders and those inmates nearing release from the correctional system.

3. An inmate shall be required to attend the 150 hours of adult basic education instruction unless such inmate:

a. Is serving a life sentence or is under sentence of death.

b. Is specifically exempted for security or health reasons.

c. Is housed at a community correctional center, road prison, work camp, or career and technical education ~~vocational~~ center.

d. Attains a functional literacy level after attendance in fewer than 150 hours of adult basic education instruction.

e. Is unable to enter such instruction because of insufficient facilities, staff, or classroom capacity.

4. The Department of Corrections shall provide classes to accommodate those inmates assigned to correctional or public work programs after normal working hours. The department shall develop a plan to provide academic and career and technical

education ~~vocational~~ classes on a more frequent basis and at times that accommodate the increasing number of inmates with work assignments, to the extent that resources permit.

5. If an inmate attends and actively participates in the 150 hours of instruction, the Department of Corrections may grant a one-time award of up to 6 additional days of incentive gain-time, which must be credited and applied as provided by law. Active participation means, at a minimum, that the inmate is attentive, responsive, cooperative, and completes assigned work.

(j) Recommend the award of additional incentive gain-time for inmates who receive a high school equivalency diploma or a career and technical education ~~vocational~~ certificate.

(5) The Correctional Education Program may:

(a) Establish a prison entrepreneurship program and adopt procedures for admitting student inmates. If the department elects to develop the program, it must include at least 180 days of in-prison education. The program curriculum must include a component on developing a business plan, procedures for graduation and certification of successful student inmates, and at least 90 days of transitional and postrelease continuing educational services. Transitional and postrelease continuing educational services may be offered to graduate student inmates on a voluntary basis and are not a requirement for completion of the program. The department shall enter into agreements with

public or private colleges or universities, other nonprofit entities, or other authorized providers under s. 1002.45(1)(a)1. to implement the program. The program must be funded with existing resources.

(b) ~~(6) The Correctional Education Program may~~ Work in cooperation with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Florida Forestry Service Division, and the Florida Department of Financial Services, Division of State Fire Marshal to develop a program for implementation within state correctional institutions or correctional facilities to train and certify inmates as firefighters. The program should include, but not be limited to, certification of inmates as state forest staff trained to help protect homes, forestland, and natural resources from the effects of wildfires throughout the state.

(c) Implement a career and technical education program to be offered at the state correctional institutions and correctional facilities to train and license inmates to operate a commercial motor vehicle. The career and technical education curriculum must include training for Class A and Class B driver licenses and participation in such curriculum is limited to nonviolent inmates who have 2 years or less remaining to serve on his or her sentence. To be eligible to enroll in a Class A or Class B commercial driver license training program offered in accordance with this paragraph, an inmate must be proficient in English. Such proficiency may be demonstrated in a manner

specified by the department or the department's designee.

(6)~~(7)~~ The department may contract with a district school board, the Florida Virtual School, a charter school authorized to operate under s. 1002.33, or a Florida College System institution to provide education services in the Correctional Education Program. The education services may include any educational or~~,~~ career and technical education~~, or vocational~~ training authorized by the department.

Section 4. Paragraph (b) of subsection (1) of section 945.091, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

945.091 Extension of the limits of confinement; restitution by employed inmates.—

(1) The department may adopt rules permitting the extension of the limits of the place of confinement of an inmate as to whom there is reasonable cause to believe that the inmate will honor his or her trust by authorizing the inmate, under prescribed conditions and following investigation and approval by the secretary, or the secretary's designee, who shall maintain a written record of such action, to leave the confines of that place unaccompanied by a custodial agent for a prescribed period of time to:

(b) Work at paid employment, participate in an education or a training program, or voluntarily serve a public or nonprofit agency or faith-based service group in the community, while continuing as an inmate of the institution or facility in

which the inmate is confined, except during the hours of his or her employment, education, training, or service and traveling thereto and therefrom. An inmate may travel to and from his or her place of employment, education, or training only by means of walking, bicycling, or using public transportation or transportation that is provided by a family member or employer. Contingent upon specific appropriations or as authorized in s. 945.0913(2), the department may transport an inmate in a state-owned vehicle if the inmate is unable to obtain other means of travel to his or her place of employment, education, or training. An inmate may be permitted to be transported in or drive a state-owned vehicle if the inmate is appropriately licensed and enrolled in or a completer of a department-operated or contracted commercial driver license program for the purpose of completing program requirements or demonstrating proficiency in the program. At least one certified correctional officer must be present during such transport or operation.

1. An inmate may participate in paid employment only during the last 36 months of his or her confinement, unless sooner requested by the Florida Commission on Offender Review or the Control Release Authority.

2. While working at paid employment and residing in the facility, an inmate may apply for placement at a contracted substance abuse transition housing program. The transition assistance specialist shall inform the inmate of program

availability and assess the inmate's need and suitability for transition housing assistance. If an inmate is approved for placement, the specialist shall assist the inmate. If an inmate requests and is approved for placement in a contracted faith-based substance abuse transition housing program, the specialist must consult with the chaplain before such placement. The department shall ensure that an inmate's faith orientation, or lack thereof, will not be considered in determining admission to a faith-based program and that the program does not attempt to convert an inmate toward a particular faith or religious preference.

Section 5. Section 945.0913, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

945.0913 Inmates prohibited from driving state-owned vehicles to transport inmates in a work-release program; exception.—

(1) Except as provided in subsection (2), an inmate may not drive a state-owned vehicle for the purpose of transporting inmates who are participating in a work-release program authorized in s. 945.091(1)(b).

(2) An inmate appropriately licensed and trained may drive a state-owned vehicle if he or she is enrolled in, or a completer of, a department-operated or contracted commercial driver license training program. An inmate may only operate a state-owned vehicle on department property or other state-owned

property specifically designated for commercial driver license training purposes. At least one certified correctional officer must be present during such operation.

Section 6. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.

PCS For HB 753

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
BILL ANALYSIS

This bill analysis was prepared by nonpartisan committee staff and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.

BILL #: PCS for HB 753	**COMPANION BILL:** SB 1036 (Calatayud)
TITLE: School Counselors	**LINKED BILLS:** None
SPONSOR(S): Careers & Workforce Subcommittee	**RELATED BILLS:** None

Committee References

Orig. Comm.: Careers & Workforce

SUMMARY

Effect of the Bill:
The PCS provides an exemption for individuals seeking employment as a school counselor from the demonstration of mastery of general knowledge and professional preparation and education competence requirements for educator certification.

Fiscal or Economic Impact:
The PCS will have an indeterminate positive impact on private sector expenditures through savings on examination fees for school counselors and an indeterminate negative impact on state revenues due to the loss of such fees.

JUMP TO SUMMARY ANALYSIS RELEVANT INFORMATION BILL HISTORY

ANALYSIS

EFFECT OF THE BILL:

The PCS provides an exemption for individuals seeking employment as a school counselor from the demonstration of mastery of general knowledge and professional preparation and education competence requirements for educator certification. The PCS is limited to those individuals seeking employment as school counselors, who must have a master's degree or higher in school counseling, or general counseling with school experience, as well as requisite field work. A school counselor's master's degree and demonstration of mastery of subject area knowledge could be deemed sufficient to demonstrate knowledge required by the exempted certification requirements. Additionally, the professional preparation and education competence requirement is limited, by statute, to classroom teachers and school administrators and in many cases would fall outside of the daily duties of a school counselor. (Section 1).

The effective date of the PCS is July 1, 2026. (Section 2).

FISCAL OR ECONOMIC IMPACT:

STATE GOVERNMENT:

The PCS has an indeterminate negative fiscal impact on state revenues due to the loss of examination fees from the general knowledge ($130.00 per initial registration and full retake)[1] and professional education examination ($150.00 per initial registration and retake) from school counselors seeking educator certification.

[1] The fees would be lower if the individual only needed to take subtests and not the full administration. *See* text associated with note 41, *infra*.

PRIVATE SECTOR:

The PCS has an indeterminate positive fiscal impact on private sector expenditures due to school counselors seeking their educator certification no longer being required to pay examination fees for the general knowledge exam ($130.00 per initial registration and full retake)[2] and the professional education examination ($150.00 per initial registration and retake).

RELEVANT INFORMATION

SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

School Counselors in Florida

In Florida, school counselors are advanced degreed educators responsible for advising students with regard to their abilities and aptitudes, educational and occupational opportunities, and personal and social adjustments, providing placement services and overseeing the development and implementation of school counseling programs in Florida schools.[3] School counselors serve all students at all school levels while employed in district supervisory positions and school counselor education positions.[4]

Current law requires that school counselors be certified by the Florida Department of Education (DOE).[5] The State Board of Education (SBE) adopted the Florida School Counseling Standards to govern the role and responsibilities of school counselors, including but not limited to:

- professional, legal, and ethical expectations for school counselors;
- the development, implementation, and evaluation of School Counseling Programs;
- the provision of direct and indirect counseling services; and
- academic advising and planning.[6]

In 2024-25, Florida school reported 6729 school counselors serving students. This includes 2134 elementary school counselors, 3653 secondary school counselors and 941 school counselors without a specified grade level.[7]

Educator Certification

In order for a person to serve as an educator in a traditional public school, charter school, virtual school, or other publicly operated school, the person must hold a certificate issued by the DOE.[8] Persons seeking employment at a public school as a school supervisor, principal, teacher, library media specialist, school counselor, athletic coach, or in other instructional capacity must be certified.[9] The purpose of certification is to require school-based personnel to "possess the credentials, knowledge, and skills necessary to allow the opportunity for a high-quality education in the public schools."[10]

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[2] The fees would be lower if the individual only needed to take subtests and not the full administration. *See* text associated with note 41, *infra*.
[3] Florida School Counselor Association, *About FL School Counselors*, https://www.fla-schoolcounselor.org/flcounselors (last visited Jan. 12, 2026).
[4] *Id*.
[5] Section 1012.55(1)(b), F.S.
[6] Rule 6A-5.079(3), F.A.C.
[7] National Center for Education Statistics, *Common Core of Data American Public Schools: CCD Data Files*, https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/files.asp#Fiscal:2,LevelId:2,SchoolYearId:39,Page:1 (last visited Jan. 14, 2026). (click the "Flat and SAS Files" link under the "Staff" heading to download the data.) (The data is reported in FTE and reports of partial FTE result in the total not being the sum of the breakdown by classification).
[8] Sections 1012.55(1) and 1002.33(12)(f), F.S.
[9] Sections 1002.33(12)(f) (charter school teachers) and 1012.55(1), F.S. District school boards and charter school governing boards are authorized to hire non-certified individuals who possess expertise in a given field to serve in an instructional capacity. Rule 6A-1.0502, F.A.C.; ss. 1002.33(12)(f) and 1012.55(1)(c), F.S. Occupational therapists, physical therapists, audiologists, and speech therapists are not required to be certified educators. Rule 6A-1.0502(10) and (11), F.A.C.
[10] Section 1012.54, F.S.; *see* r. 6A-4.001(1), F.A.C.

The DOE issues three main types of educator certificates:

- **Professional Certificate**: The professional certificate is Florida's highest type of full-time educator certification.[11] The professional certificate is valid for 5 years and is renewable.[12]
- **Temporary Certificate**: The temporary certificate covers employment in full-time positions for which educator certification is required.[13] Generally, a temporary certificate is valid for 5 years and is nonrenewable.[14]
- **Athletic Coaching Certificate**: The athletic coaching certificate covers full-time and part-time employment as a public school's athletic coach.[15] The DOE issues two types of athletic coaching certificates – one is valid for 5 years and may be issued for subsequent 5-year periods while the other is valid for 3 years and may be issued only once.[16] The 5-year certificate requires satisfaction of certain specialization requirements established in rule.[17]

Professional Certificate Requirements

To be eligible for a professional certificate, a person must:[18]

- be at least 18 years of age;
- sign an affidavit attesting that the applicant will uphold the U.S. and State Constitutions;
- earn a bachelor's or higher degree from an accredited institution of higher learning[19] or from a nonaccredited institution identified by the DOE as having a quality program resulting in a bachelor's or higher degree;[20]
- submit to fingerprinting and background screening and not have a criminal history that requires the applicant's disqualification from certification or employment;
- be of good moral character;
- be competent and capable of performing the duties, functions, and responsibilities of a teacher;
- demonstrate mastery of general knowledge;[21]
- demonstrate mastery of subject area knowledge;[22] and
- demonstrate mastery of professional preparation and education competence, if the person serves as a classroom teacher or school administrator.[23]

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[11] Rule 6A-4.004(5), F.A.C.

[12] Section 1012.56(7)(a), F.S.; *see* r. 6A-4.0051(3)(d), F.A.C. (validity period is expressed as 5 years from July 1 of the school fiscal year). The DOE also issues a nonrenewable 5-year professional certificate that allows an applicant with a bachelor's degree in the area of speech-language impairment to complete a master's degree in speech-language impairment. Section 1012.56(7)(c), F.S.; r. 6A-4.004(6), F.A.C.

[13] Rule 6A-4.004(1)(a)2., F.A.C.

[14] Section 1012.56(7)(f), F.S. (validity period is expressed in school fiscal years); r. 6A-4.004(1)(a), F.A.C. The veteran's pathway to educator certification authorizes a 5-year nonrenewable temporary certificate. Section 1012.56(7)(b)2., F.S. The DOE also issues a nonrenewable temporary certificate, which is valid for 2 years in the area of speech-language impairment. Section 1012.56(7)(c), F.S.

[15] Section 1012.55(2)(a), F.S.

[16] Rule 6A-4.004(7), F.A.C. (validity periods expressed in school fiscal years).

[17] *See* r. 6A-4.0282, F.A.C.

[18] Section 1012.56(2)(a)-(i), F.S.

[19] Section 1012.56(2)(c), F.S.; r. 6A-4.003(1), F.A.C. (approved accrediting agencies); *see also* 34 C.F.R. ss. 602.1-602.50; U.S. Department of Education, *Institutional Accrediting Agencies,* https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-B/chapter-VI/part-602 (last visited Jan. 7, 2026).

[20] Section 1012.56(2)(c), F.S.; r. 6A-4.003(2), F.A.C. (criteria for approval of nonaccredited institutions of higher learning). For initial certification, an applicant must attain at least a 2.5 overall grade point average on a 4.0 scale in the applicant's major field of study. Section 1012.56(2)(c), F.S.

[21] Section 1012.56(2)(g) and (3), F.S.; DOE, *General Knowledge,* http://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/general-cert-requirements/general-knowledge.stml (last visited Jan. 7, 2026).

[22] Section 1012.56(2)(h) and (5), F.S.

[23] Section 1012.56(2)(i) and (6), F.S.; DOE, *Professional Preparation and Education Competence,* http://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/general-cert-requirements/professional-preparation-edu-competenc.stml (last visited Jan. 7, 2026).

Demonstrating Mastery of General Knowledge

Mastery of general knowledge may be demonstrated through any of the following methods:

- achieving a passing score on the General Knowledge Test;[24]
- achieving passing scores established in SBE rule on national or international examinations that test comparable content and relevant standards in verbal, analytical writing, and quantitative reasoning skills (*e.g.*, the verbal, analytical writing, and quantitative reasoning portions of the Graduate Record Examination);[25]
- providing documentation of a valid professional standard teaching certificate issued by another U.S. state or territory,[26] by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS),[27] or by the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE);[28]
- completing two semesters of successful, part-time or full-time teaching in a Florida College System institution, state university, or private college or university that awards an associate or higher degree and is an accredited institution or an institution identified by the DOE as having a quality program;[29] or
- documentation of receipt of a master's or higher degree from an accredited postsecondary institution that the DOE has identified as having a quality program resulting in a baccalaureate degree or higher.[30]

Demonstrating Mastery of Subject Area Knowledge

Mastery of subject area knowledge may be demonstrated through any of the following methods:

- **Bachelor's Degree Level** (for certification in a subject area for which SBE rule requires a bachelor's or higher degree):
    - If a Florida subject area examination has been developed, achieving a passing score on the Florida-developed subject area examination specified in SBE rule[31] or documentation of receipt of a master's or higher degree from an accredited postsecondary institution that the DOE has identified as having a quality program resulting in a baccalaureate degree or higher in the certificate subject area as identified in SBE rule.[32]
    - If a Florida subject area examination has not been developed, achieving a passing score on a standardized examination specified in SBE rule, including passing scores on both the oral proficiency and written proficiency examinations administered by the American Council on the

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[24] Section 1012.56(3)(a), F.S. The General Knowledge Test is part of the Florida Teacher Certification Examinations and is administered as four subtests: Reading, English Language Skills, Essay, and Mathematics. Rule 6A-4.0021(7), F.A.C.; *see also* DOE, *Competencies and Skills Required for Teacher Certification in Florida,* s. 82 (27th ed., 2022), *available at* https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7479/urlt/FTCE27thEdition22Rule.pdf (competencies and skills measured by General Knowledge Test).

[25] Section 1012.56(3)(e), F.S. The passing scores to be identified in state board rule must be at approximately the same level of rigor as is required to pass the General Knowledge Test. Rule 6A-4.002(4), F.A.C.

[26] Section 1012.56(3)(b), F.S.; *see* rr. 6A-4.002(1)(i) and 6A-4.003, F.A.C. (flush-left provisions following r. 6A-4.003(2)(e), F.A.C.). Section 1012.56(3)(b), F.S. specifies that a valid professional standard teaching certificate issued by *another state* is an acceptable means of demonstrating mastery of general knowledge. The DOE also recognizes certificates issued by U.S. territories. *See* DOE, *General Knowledge,* http://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/general-cert-requirements/general-knowledge.stml (last visited Jan. 7, 2026).

[27] Section 1012.56(3)(c), F.S.; *see* r. 6A-4.002(1)(j), F.A.C.; *see also* National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, https://www.nbpts.org/ (last visited Jan. 7, 2026).

[28] Section 1012.56(3)(c), F.S.; *see* r. 6A-4.002(1)(j), F.A.C.

[29] Section 1012.56(3)(d), F.S.; *see also* r. 6A-4.003(1)-(2), F.A.C. (approval of accredited and nonaccredited institutions of higher learning).

[30] Section 1012.56(3)(f), F.S.

[31] Section 1012.56(5)(a), F.S. The Florida Teacher Certification Examinations include 39 subject area tests. DOE, *Test Information Guides*, http://www.fl.nesinc.com/FL_TIGS.asp (last visited Jan. 7, 2026); *see also* DOE, *Competencies and Skills Required for Teacher Certification in Florida,* ss. 1-63 (27th ed., 2022), *available at* https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7479/urlt/FTCE27thEdition22Rule.pdf; *see also* r. 6A-4.0021(9), F.A.C. (scoring of subject area tests).

[32] Section 1012.56(5)(i), F.S.

Teaching of Foreign Languages[33] or successful completion of a United States Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center program or a passing score on the Defense Language Proficiency Test.[34]

- For certification in any other subject area for which there is no Florida subject area test or standardized examination specified in state board rule (e.g., Dance), completing the required bachelor's or higher degree and content courses specified in SBE rule[35] and verification of subject area competence by the district school superintendent or, for a state-supported or private school, the school's chief administrative officer.[36]

- **Master's Degree Level** (for certification in a subject area for which SBE rule requires a master's or higher degree): Completing the required master's or higher degree and content courses specified in SBE rule and achieving a passing score on the corresponding Florida-developed subject area test or standardized examination specified in SBE rule.[37]
- **Out-of-State Certification**: Providing documentation of a valid professional standard teaching certificate issued for a subject area by another U.S. state or territory or by NBPTS or ABCTE, if the certificate is comparable to the Florida professional certificate issued for the same subject area.[38]

Demonstration of Professional Preparation and Education Competence

Mastery of professional preparation and education competence may be demonstrated through any of the following methods:

- Successful completion of an approved teacher preparation program at a postsecondary educational institution within this state and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by SBE rule;
- Successful completion of a teacher preparation program at a postsecondary educational institution outside Florida and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by SBE rule;
- Documentation of a valid professional standard teaching certificate issued by another state;
- Documentation of a valid certificate issued by the NBPTS or a national educator credentialing board approved by the SBE;
- Documentation of two semesters of successful, full-time or part-time teaching in a Florida College System institution, state university, or private college or university that awards an associate or higher degree and is an accredited institution or an institution of higher education identified by the Department of Education as having a quality program and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by SBE rule;
- Successful completion of professional preparation courses as specified in SBE rule, successful completion of a professional education competence program, and documentation of 3 years of being rated effective or highly effective while holding a temporary certificate;
- Successful completion of a professional learning certification program; or
- Successful completion of a competency-based certification program and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by rule of the SBE.[39]

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[33] Section 1012.56(5)(b), F.S.; r. 6A-4.0243(1)(e), F.A.C.; *see* American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), *Assessments*, https://www.actfl.org/assessments (last visited May 5, 2025); Language Testing International (ACTFL Language Testing Office), *ACTFL,* https://www.languagetesting.com/ (last visited Jan. 7, 2026).

[34] Section 1012.56(5)(g)-(h), F.S.

[35] *See, e.g.,* r. 6A-4.0123, F.A.C. (specialization requirements for certification in dance); *see also* DOE, *Florida Certificate Subjects,* http://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/certificate-subjects/ (last visited Jan. 7, 2026).

[36] Section 1012.56(5)(c), F.S.; r. 6A-4.002(4), F.A.C.

[37] Section 1012.56(5)(d), F.S.; *see* DOE, *Florida Certificate Subjects,* http://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/certificate-subjects/ (last visited Jan. 7, 2026).

[38] Section 1012.56(5)(e), F.S., and (f), F.S.; r. 6A-4.002(1)(i)-(j), F.A.C.; DOE, *NBPTS Certificate Subjects and Corresponding Subjects in Florida,* http://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/pathways-routes/nbpts-certificate-subjects-correspondi.stml (last visited Jan. 7, 2026).

[39] Section 1012.56(6), F.S.

Educator Certification Examination Fees

The DOE sets registration fees for the various exams required for educator certification, including initial registration and retakes.[40] For the general knowledge exam, the initial registration fee is $130.00 for the full battery of 4 subjects. An individual is able to retake the General Knowledge exam by subtest with the retake registration fees being the following:

- One subtest - $32.50;
- Two subtests - $60.00;
- Three subtests - $97.50;
- Full battery retake - $130.00.[41]

For subject area examinations, the initial registration fee is $150.00. For subject area exams with subparts, the $150.00 fee is divided evenly among the subparts for retakes. If the subject area exam does not have subparts then the retake fee is $150.00.[42]

For the Professional Education examination, the initial registration fee, as well as the fee for a retake of the exam, is $150.00.[43]

Current law and rule provide for several fee waivers including the Military Testing Fee Waiver,[44] Retired First Responder Fee Waiver,[45] and Exceptional Student Education K–12/Elementary Education K–6 Waivers.[46]

School Counselor Certification Specializations

An individual holding an educator certification from the DOE may apply for an additional coverage[47] or endorsement[48] indicating advanced education or experience in a particular subject, area, or field.[49] The DOE offers a specialization for certification in school counseling that can be earned in under two plans:

- Plan One. A master's or higher degree with a graduate major in guidance and counseling or school counseling that includes a minimum of 600 clock hours of supervised internship serving school-aged students in a prekindergarten, an elementary or a secondary school setting; or
- Plan Two. A master's or higher degree with a graduate in counseling other than guidance and counseling or school counseling that includes a minimum 600 clock hours of supervised internship with school-aged children and their families with at least 9 semester hours of graduate credit to include the following areas:
    - Student appraisal and evaluation methods in prekindergarten, elementary and secondary schools including interpretation and analysis of standardized tests and other assessment results that assist students in career exploration, academic skills and personal and social skill development;
    - College and career planning for prekindergarten, elementary and secondary school students including college and career exploration and knowledge of financial aid and financing of postsecondary education options;
    - Principles, philosophy, organization and administration of a comprehensive school counseling program in prekindergarten, elementary and secondary schools; and

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[40] *See* r. 6A-4.0021, F.A.C.
[41] Rule 6A-4.0021(4)(b), F.A.C.
[42] Rule 6A-4.0021(4)(b)-(e), F.A.C.
[43] *Id*.
[44] Section 1012.59(3)(a)-(c), F.S. and r. 6A-4.0021(13), F.A.C.
[45] Section 1012.59(3)(d), F.S. and r. 6A-4.0021(14), F.A.C.
[46] Section 1012.59(4), F.S. and r. 6A-4.0021(15), F.A.C.
[47] The term "coverage" as used in Florida State Board of Education rules for educator certification purposes shall be defined as the designation on a Florida educator's certificate which indicates the area in which an individual has a content knowledge base. The term "coverage" shall be used synonymously with the terms "subject," "area," or "field."
[48] The term "endorsement" as used in Florida State Board of Education rules for educator certification purposes shall be defined as a rider on a Florida educator's certificate with a designated coverage. An endorsement shown on a certificate with a coverage signifies a pedagogical knowledge base which targets particular levels, stages of development, or circumstances.
[49] Rule 6A-4.002(1)(e)-(f), F.A.C.

  - Consultation skills and techniques for conferring with groups such as agencies, teachers and parents.
- Plan Three. A master's or higher degree with a graduate major in school counseling that includes a minimum of 300 clock hours of supervised internship serving school-aged students in a prekindergarten, elementary or secondary school setting if the applicant:
  - Is a current full-time teacher;
  - Has been employed as a teacher for at least five (5) school years; and
  - Has earned an effective or highly effective rating under Section 1012.34, F.S., on his or her performance evaluation for the most recent three (3) years the teacher was employed in a Florida public school.[50]

Additionally, individuals seeking the school counseling specialization must pass the School Counseling (PK-12) subject area examination adopted by the SBE.[51]

OTHER RESOURCES:

Rule 6A-4.0181, F.A.C. - Specialization Requirements for Certification in School Counseling (Grades PK-12) - Specialty Class

BILL HISTORY

COMMITTEE REFERENCE	ACTION	DATE	STAFF DIRECTOR/ POLICY CHIEF	ANALYSIS PREPARED BY
Orig. Comm.: Careers & Workforce Subcommittee			Kiner	Wolff

[50] Rule 6A-4.0181, F.A.C.
[51] *See* s. 1012.56(5)(d), F.S.; r. 6A-4.002 and 6A-4.0021, F.A.C.

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to school counselors; amending s. 1012.55, F.S.; providing that persons employed as school counselors are exempt from specified educator certification requirements; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Subsection (6) of section 1012.55, Florida Statutes, is renumbered as subsection (7), and a new subsection (6) is added to that section, to read:

1012.55 Positions for which certificates required.—

(6) A person who is seeking employment as a school counselor is exempt from the educator certification requirements in s. 1012.56(2)(g) and (i).

Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.

COMMITTEE/SUBCOMMITTEE ACTION

ADOPTED	____	(Y/N)
ADOPTED AS AMENDED	____	(Y/N)
ADOPTED W/O OBJECTION	____	(Y/N)
FAILED TO ADOPT	____	(Y/N)
WITHDRAWN	____	(Y/N)
OTHER		

Committee/Subcommittee hearing bill: Careers & Workforce Subcommittee

Representative McFarland offered the following:

Amendment (with title amendment)

Between lines 9 and 10, insert:

Section 1. Paragraph (a) of subsection (3) of section 1012.34, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1012.34 Personnel evaluation procedures and criteria.—

(3) EVALUATION PROCEDURES AND CRITERIA.—Instructional personnel and school administrator performance evaluations must be based upon the performance of students assigned to their classrooms or schools, as provided in this section. Pursuant to this section, a school district's performance evaluation system is not limited to basing unsatisfactory performance of instructional personnel and school administrators solely upon

student performance, but may include other criteria to evaluate instructional personnel and school administrators' performance, or any combination of student performance and other criteria. Evaluation procedures and criteria must comply with, but are not limited to, the following:

(a) A performance evaluation must be conducted for each employee at least once a year, except that a classroom teacher, as defined in s. 1012.01(2)(a), excluding substitute teachers, who is newly hired by the district school board must be observed and evaluated at least twice in the first year of teaching in the school district. The performance evaluation must be based upon sound educational principles and contemporary research in effective educational practices. The evaluation criteria must include:

1. Performance of students.—At least one-third of a performance evaluation must be based upon data and indicators of student performance, as determined by each school district. This portion of the evaluation must include growth or achievement data of the teacher's students or, for a school administrator, the students attending the school over the course of at least 3 years. If less than 3 years of data are available, the years for which data are available must be used. The proportion of growth or achievement data may be determined by instructional assignment.

2. Instructional practice.—For instructional personnel, at least one-third of the performance evaluation must be based upon instructional practice. Evaluation criteria used when annually observing classroom teachers, as defined in s. 1012.01(2)(a), excluding substitute teachers, must include indicators based upon each of the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices adopted by the State Board of Education.

a. For instructional personnel who are not classroom teachers or certified school counselors, evaluation criteria must be based upon indicators of the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices and may include specific job expectations related to student support.

b. For certified school counselors, evaluation criteria must be based upon indicators of the Florida School Counseling Standards adopted by the State Board of Education.

c. This section does not preclude a school administrator from visiting and observing classroom teachers throughout the school year for purposes of providing mentorship, training, instructional feedback, or professional learning.

3. Instructional leadership.—For school administrators, at least one-third of the performance evaluation must be based on instructional leadership. Evaluation criteria for instructional leadership must include indicators based upon each of the leadership standards adopted by the State Board of Education under s. 1012.986, including performance measures related to the

effectiveness of classroom teachers in the school, the administrator's appropriate use of evaluation criteria and procedures, recruitment and retention of effective and highly effective classroom teachers, improvement in the percentage of instructional personnel evaluated at the highly effective or effective level, and other leadership practices that result in student learning growth. The system may include a means to give parents and instructional personnel an opportunity to provide input into the administrator's performance evaluation.

4. Other indicators of performance.—For instructional personnel and school administrators, the remainder of a performance evaluation may include, but is not limited to, professional and job responsibilities as recommended by the State Board of Education or identified by the district school board and, for instructional personnel, peer reviews, objectively reliable survey information from students and parents based on teaching practices that are consistently associated with higher student achievement, and other valid and reliable measures of instructional practice.

T I T L E A M E N D M E N T

Remove line 2 and insert:

An act relating to school counselors; amending s. 1012.34, F.S.; requiring evaluation criteria for

certified school counselors to be based on specified standards; amending s.

PCS For HB 1081

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
BILL ANALYSIS

This bill analysis was prepared by nonpartisan committee staff and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.

BILL #: PCS for HB 1081	**COMPANION BILL:** SB 1266 (Calatayud)
TITLE: Cybersecurity Internships	**LINKED BILLS:** None
SPONSOR(S): Careers & Workforce Subcommittee	**RELATED BILLS:** None

Committee References

Orig. Comm.: Careers & Workforce

SUMMARY

Effect of the Bill:
The PCS creates, subject to appropriation, the Cybersecurity Experiential Internship and Clearance Readiness Program (Program) within the Department of Commerce (Commerce) to accelerate the development of Florida's cybersecurity workforce by increasing Florida's highly qualified, clearance-ready cybersecurity graduates.

Fiscal or Economic Impact:
None.

JUMP TO SUMMARY ANALYSIS RELEVANT INFORMATION BILL HISTORY

ANALYSIS

EFFECT OF THE BILL:

The PCS provides legislative findings and intent to build on current cybersecurity initiatives operating at the University of South Florida (USF) and the University of West Florida (UWF). To that end and subject to appropriation, the PCS creates the Cybersecurity Experiential Internship and Clearance Readiness Program (Program) within the Department of Commerce (Commerce). The PCS requires Commerce to enter into an agreement with the Florida Center for Cyber Security (Cyber Florida) within the USF to implement the Program in collaboration with all National Security Agency National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity (NCAE-C)-designated state universities and Florida College System institutions. The Program must include the following components:

- increasing the number of experiential cyber risk analyst internships statewide by using an instrumented platform of automated assessments with employers based in this state in the defense, finance, health care, transportation, utility, and critical infrastructure sectors;
- providing intern-supporting organizations with actionable, prioritized analytics, reporting, and risk mitigation action plans to enhance cyber resilience across this state;
- delivering a federal security clearance readiness curriculum, including comprehensive background checks preparation, national security information and protection training, clearance application preparation and vetting, and mentoring for selected participants;
- providing CompTIA Security+ certification training and examination for selected participants;
- coordinating with state, federal, and private sector partners to facilitate placement of graduates in high-demand cybersecurity roles; and
- providing access to datasets for statewide cyber assessments, research, and development. (Section 1).

The PCS requires that the Program be available at all NCAE-C-designated state universities and Florida College System (FCS) institutions by the beginning of the 2026-27 academic year.

Under the PCS, Commerce is required to submit an annual report, beginning January 1, 2027, and continuing through January 1, 2032, to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives that contains all of the following information:

- the number of students participating in internships, clearance readiness preparation, and CompTIA Security+ certification programs at each institution;
- the number of students who have earned CompTIA Security+ certification and the number of students who have completed internship and clearance readiness milestones;
- the number of students who subsequently reported entering federal, state, or private sector cybersecurity positions requiring a federal public trust or national security clearance, and any available data on those positions; and
- recommendations for program improvements, including potential integration with other state workforce initiatives. (Section 1).

The PCS provides for the expiration of the Program on January 1, 2032. (Section 1).

The effective date of the PCS is July 1, 2026. (Section 2).

RELEVANT INFORMATION

SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

Cybersecurity Background

Over the last decade, cybersecurity has rapidly become a growing concern. Cyberattacks are growing in frequency and severity. Cybercrime was expected to annually inflict $8 trillion worth of damage globally.[1] The United States is often a target of cyberattacks, including attacks on critical infrastructure, and has been a target of more significant cyberattacks[2] over the last 14 years than any other country.[3] The Colonial Pipeline is an example of critical infrastructure that was attacked, disrupting what is arguably the nation's most important fuel conduit.[4]

Ransomware is a type of cybersecurity incident where malware[5] that is designed to encrypt files on a device renders the files and the systems that rely on them unusable. In other words, critical information is no longer accessible. During a ransomware attack, malicious actors demand a ransom in exchange for regained access through decryption. If the ransom is not paid, the ransomware actors will often threaten to sell or leak the data or authentication information. Even if the ransom is paid, there is no guarantee that the bad actor will follow through with decryption.

In recent years, ransomware incidents have become increasingly prevalent among the nation's state, local, tribal, and territorial government entities and critical infrastructure organizations.[6] For example, Tallahassee Memorial Hospital was hit by a ransomware attack early in 2023, and the hospital's systems were forced to shut down,

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[1] Cybercrime Magazine, *Cybercrime to Cost the World $8 Trillion Annually in 2023*, https://cybersecurityventures.com/cybercrime-to-cost-the-world-8-trillion-annually-in-2023/ (last visited Jan. 14, 2026).

[2] "Significant cyber-attacks" are defined as cyber-attacks on a country's government agencies, defense, and high-tech companies, or economic crimes with losses equating to more than a million dollars. Specops, *The Countries Experiencing the Most 'Significant' Cyber-attacks*, https://specopssoft.com/blog/countries-experiencing-significant-cyber-attacks/ (last visited Jan. 14, 2026).

[3] *Id*.

[4] S&P Global, *Pipeline operators must start reporting cyberattacks to government: TSA orders*, https://www.spglobal.com/commodityinsights/en/market-insights/latest-news/electric-power/052721-pipeline-operators-must-start-reporting-cyberattacks-to-government-tsa-orders?utm_campaign=corporatepro&utm_medium=contentdigest&utm_source=esgmay2021 (last visited Jan. 23, 2024).

[5] "Malware" means hardware, firmware, or software that is intentionally included or inserted in a system for a harmful purpose. https://csrc.nist.gov/glossary/term/malware (last visited Jan. 14, 2026).

[6] Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency, *Ransomware 101,* https://www.cisa.gov/stopransomware/ransomware-101 (last visited Jan. 14, 2026).

impacting many local residents in need of medical care.[7] Likewise, Tampa General Hospital detected a data breach in May of 2023, which may have compromised the data of up to 1.2 million patients.[8]

Florida Center for Cybersecurity

Cyber Florida is housed within USF and was first established in 2014.[9] The goals of Cyber Florida are to:[10]

- position Florida as the national leader in cybersecurity and its related workforce primarily through advancing and funding education, and research and development initiatives in cybersecurity and related fields, with a secondary emphasis on, and community engagement and cybersecurity awareness;
- assist in the creation of jobs in the state's cybersecurity industry and enhance the existing cybersecurity workforce through education, research, applied science, and engagements and partnerships with the private and military sectors;
- act as a cooperative facilitator for state business and higher education communities to share cybersecurity knowledge, resources, and training;
- seek out research and development agreements and other partnerships with major military installations and affiliated contractors to assist, when possible, in homeland cybersecurity defense initiatives;
- attract cybersecurity companies and jobs to the state with an emphasis on defense, finance, health care, transportation, and utility sectors; and
- conduct, fund, and facilitate research and applied science that leads to the creation of new technologies and software packages that have military and civilian applications and which can be transferred for military and homeland defense purposes or for sale or use in the private sector.

If Cyber Florida receives a request for assistance from the Department of Management Services, Florida Digital Service, or another state agency, Cyber Florida is authorized, but may not be compelled by the agency, to conduct, consult on, or otherwise assist any state-funded initiatives related to:

- Cybersecurity training, professional development, and education for state and local government employees, including school districts and the judicial branch.
- Increasing the cybersecurity effectiveness of the state's and local governments' technology platforms and infrastructure, including school districts and the judicial branch.

Since 2022, Cyber Florida has received annual appropriations:

Fiscal Year	Appropriation Amount
2022-23[11]	$ 20,500,000
2023-24[12]	$ 10,500,000
2024-25[13]	$ 35,500,000
2025-26[14]	$ 35,500,000
Total:	$ 102,000,000

National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity

[7] Tallahassee Democrat, *TMH says it has taken 'major step' toward restoration after cybersecurity incident* (Feb. 15, 2023) https://www.tallahassee.com/story/news/local/2023/02/14/tmh-update-hospital-has-taken-major-step-toward-restoration/69904510007/ (last visited Jan. 14, 2026).
[8] Alessandro Mascellino, Infosecurity Magazine, *Tampa General Hospital Data Breach Impacts 1.2 Million Patients* (Jul. 24, 2023), https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/tampa-hospital-data-breach/ (last visited Jan. 14, 2026).
[9] Chapter 2014-56, L.O.F.
[10] Section 1004.444(2), F.S.
[11] Specific Appropriation 157A, s. 2, ch. 2022-156, L.O.F.
[12] Specific Appropriation 156, s. 2, ch. 2023-239, L.O.F.
[13] Specific Appropriation 160, s. 2, ch. 2024-231, L.O.F.
[14] Specific Appropriation 161, s. 2, ch. 2025-198, L.O.F.

The NCAE-C program is managed by the National Security Agency's National Cryptologic School. Federal partners include the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the National Institute of Standards and Technology/National Initiative on Cybersecurity Education, the National Science Foundation, the Department of Defense Office of the Chief Information Officer, and U.S. Cyber Command.[15]

NCAE-C program aims to create and manage a collaborative cybersecurity educational program with community colleges, colleges, and universities that:

- establishes standards for cybersecurity curriculum and academic excellence;
- includes competency development among students and faculty;
- values community outreach and leadership in professional development;
- integrates cybersecurity practice within the institution across academic disciplines; and
- actively engages in solutions to challenges facing cybersecurity education.[16]

All regionally accredited two-year, four-year, and graduate-level institutions in the United States are eligible to apply to become a CAE-C designated institution. An institution or program must apply for re-designation every five academic years.[17] Academic institutions may choose from three designations.[18] The designation process is a combination of elements related to the institution focused on outputs for determining academic achievement. This combination assures that the institution meets the desired characteristics of a CAE institution, and that the academic delivery to students is producing the qualified workforce needed by the nation. CAE-designated institutions must complete validation of a program of study, which is a series of courses and experiences that a student can reasonably accomplish in the course of attaining a degree or completing a certificate.[19]

Among Florida's state colleges and state universities, nine state universities[20] and 13 state colleges[21] are NCAE-C-designated.[22]

CompTIA Security+ certification

CompTIA Security+ is an early-career cybersecurity certification that validates essential skills in securing tech networks, detecting threats, and responding to cybersecurity incidents. Designed for tech professionals beginning or advancing in cybersecurity, CompTIA Security+ certification is useful for roles such as security administrator, security specialist, network administrator, systems administrator, and security analyst.[23] The certification is vendor-neutral certification that establishes foundational knowledge in cybersecurity and can be used as a stepping-stone to advanced certifications like CISSP, CISM or SecurityX.[24]

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[15] National Security Agency, *National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity*, https://www.nsa.gov/Academics/Centers-of-Academic-Excellence/ (last visited Jan. 14, 2026).
[16] *Id*.
[17] Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity Community, *What is a CAE-C?*, https://www.caecommunity.org/what-is-a-cae-c (last visited Jan. 14, 2026).
[18] The three designations are Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense (CAE-CD), Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Operations (CAE-CO), and Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Research (CAE-R). *See* Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity Community, *What is a CAE-C?*, https://www.caecommunity.org/what-is-a-cae-c (last visited Jan. 14, 2026).
[19] National Security Agency, *National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity*, https://www.nsa.gov/Academics/Centers-of-Academic-Excellence/ (last visited Jan. 14, 2026).
[20] The universities are: Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University; Florida Atlantic University; Florida International University; Florida State University; University of Central Florida; University of Florida; University of North Florida; University of South Florida; and University of West Florida.
[21] The FCS Institutions are: Chipola College; Daytona State College; Eastern Florida State College; Florida State College at Jacksonville; Indian River State College; Miami Dade College; Palm Beach State College; Pensacola State College; Santa Fe College; Seminole State College; St. Petersburg College; Tallahassee State College; and Valencia College.
[22] Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity Community, *CAE Institution Map*, https://maps.caecommunity.org/ (last visited Jan. 14, 2026)
[23] CompTIA, *Security +: Resources*, https://www.comptia.org/en-us/certifications/security/#resources (Jan. 14, 2026)
[24] *Id*.

The CompTIA Security+ exam is available at Pearson VUE testing centers or online with remote proctoring.[25] The current version of the exam consists of a maximum of 90 multiple-choice and performance-based questions over 90 minutes.[26]

Internships

Internships have become essential to career preparation. They bridge the gap between academic knowledge and industry expectations, helping students develop the competencies that a technology-driven workforce demands. Internships help students:

- Apply classroom learning in professional settings.
- Clarify career interests and strengths.
- Gain exposure to tools, timelines, and team environments.
- Build a professional network.
- Strengthen resumes and job interviews.[27]

Significantly, more than 70 percent of employers plan to maintain or increase intern hiring.[28] Paid interns average more job offers and higher starting salaries than unpaid interns and non-interns.[29] Over two-thirds of 2024 graduates nationwide completed at least one internship.[30]

Current Initiatives

USF launched the Security Training Collaborative (Collaborative) in 2020 through a partnership with Security Management International, a consulting firm based in Washington, D.C. The Collaborative is a 16-week internship program where students gain hands-on experience far beyond traditional classroom learning. They take part in exercises with the Secret Service, U.S. Marshals and Capitol Police, while weekly sessions with national security experts introduce them to the latest trends in intelligence and security. The Collaborative leverages Cyber Florida and the Global and National Security Institute's Future Strategist Program at USF to give students additional resources and opportunities.[31]

In 2024, the UWF received funding to develop a pilot program that helps students prepare security clearance applications and understand the process of applying for a security clearance. The program will also facilitate internships with Florida-based defense companies that require security clearances. [32]

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[25] *Id*.
[26] CompTIA, *Security+: Overview*, https://www.comptia.org/en-us/certifications/security/#overview (Jan. 14, 2026).
[27] University of South Florida, Bellini College of Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity and Computing, *Internships*, https://www.usf.edu/ai-cybersecurity-computing/academics/internships.aspx (last visited Jan. 14, 2026).
[28] National Association of Colleges and Employers, *More the 70% of Organizations Expect to Increase or Maintain Intern Hiring Despite Overall Dip in Hiring*, https://www.naceweb.org/talent-acquisition/internships/more-than-70-percent-of-organizations-expect-to-increase-or-maintain-intern-hiring-despite-overall-dip-in-hiring (last visited Jan. 14, 2026).
[29] *See* National Association of Colleges and Employers, *Job Outlook 2024*, pp. 6 and 32, *available at* https://www.naceweb.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/2023/publication/research-report/2024-nace-job-outlook.pdf and National Association of Colleges and Employers, *Executive Summary The 2024 Student Survey Report*, p. 4, *available at* https://www.naceweb.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/2024/publication/executive-summary/2024-nace-student-survey-executive-summary-four-year.pdf?Status=Master&sfvrsn=4d77a2d1_3
[30] National Association of Colleges and Employers, *Executive Summary The 2024 Student Survey Report*, p. 4, *available at* https://www.naceweb.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/2024/publication/executive-summary/2024-nace-student-survey-executive-summary-four-year.pdf?Status=Master&sfvrsn=4d77a2d1_3.
[31] University of South Florida, *USF builds national security talent pipeline through innovative program*, https://www.usf.edu/news/2025/usf-builds-national-security-talent-pipeline-through-rare-program.aspx (Jan. 14, 2026).
[32] University of West Florida, *UWF awarded $320,210 to help students understand and prepare applications for security clearance*, https://mdi.kyj.mybluehost.me/uwf-awarded-320210-to-help-students-understand-and-prepare-applications-for-security-clearance/ (Jan. 14, 2026).

RECENT LEGISLATION:

YEAR	BILL #/SUBJECT	HOUSE/*SENATE* SPONSOR(S)	OTHER INFORMATION
2024	CS/CS/CS/HB 1555 - Cybersecurity	Giallombardo/ *Collins*	The bill became law on July 1, 2024.

BILL HISTORY

COMMITTEE REFERENCE	ACTION	DATE	STAFF DIRECTOR/ POLICY CHIEF	ANALYSIS PREPARED BY
Orig. Comm.: Careers & Workforce Subcommittee			Kiner	Wolff

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to cybersecurity internships; creating s. 1004.0983, F.S.; providing legislative findings; providing legislative intent; subject to legislative appropriation, creating the Cybersecurity Experiential Internship and Clearance Readiness Program within the Department of Commerce; requiring the department to enter into an agreement with the Florida Center for Cybersecurity (Cyber Florida) to implement the program in collaboration with specified universities and institutions; requiring that the program include specified components; requiring that the program be available at specified universities and institutions beginning in a specified academic year; requiring the department, using data and analyses provided by Cyber Florida, to submit a report by a specified date and annually thereafter to the Governor and the Legislature; providing requirements for the report; providing for expiration of the program; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Section 1004.0983, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

1004.0983 Cybersecurity Experiential Internship and Clearance Readiness Program.—

(1)(a) The Legislature finds that this state's cybersecurity workforce is essential to state and national security, multi-sector state economic resilience, and the protection of critical infrastructure. The Legislature also finds that this state has a persistent shortfall in its supply of qualified cybersecurity professionals relative to the workforce demand and that the growing integration of digital technologies in all economic sectors will exacerbate this workforce gap in the future.

(b) The Legislature further finds that the elements of the program described in this section were successfully tested and refined in two pilot programs: an experiential cyber internship program with the University of South Florida and a combined security clearance readiness and cyber certification program with the University of West Florida. Both schools are designated as National Security Agency National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity (NCAE-C). The successful pilot programs demonstrated the feasibility and effectiveness of combining cybersecurity experiential internships, federal security clearance readiness preparation, and CompTIA Security+ certification for students as critical elements of workforce development.

(c) The Legislature further finds that expansion of this

program statewide to all NCAE-C-designated state universities and Florida College System institutions will accelerate the development of a highly qualified, clearance-ready cybersecurity workforce. This expanded capacity to develop a more qualified cybersecurity workforce is necessary to both close existing gaps and keep pace with the growth in demand for cybersecurity talent within this state.

(2)(a) The Legislature intends to establish the Cybersecurity Experiential Internship and Clearance Readiness Program across all NCAE-C-designated state universities and Florida College System institutions, beginning with the 2026-2027 academic year.

(b) The Legislature further intends to sustain the program through the 2030-2031 academic year and establish clear metrics and reporting requirements to measure the impact on this state's workforce and national security posture.

(3) Subject to appropriation, the Cybersecurity Experiential Internship and Clearance Readiness Program is created within the Department of Commerce. The department shall enter into an agreement with the Florida Center for Cybersecurity (Cyber Florida) at the University of South Florida, to implement the program in collaboration with all NCAE-C-designated state universities and Florida College System institutions.

(4) The program shall include all of the following

components:

(a) Increasing the number of experiential cyber risk analyst internships statewide by using an instrumented platform of automated assessments with employers based in this state in the defense, finance, health care, transportation, utility, and critical infrastructure sectors.

(b) Providing intern-supporting organizations with actionable, prioritized analytics, reporting, and risk mitigation action plans to enhance cyber resilience across this state.

(c) Delivering a federal security clearance readiness curriculum, including comprehensive background checks preparation, national security information and protection training, clearance application preparation and vetting, and mentoring for selected participants.

(d) Providing CompTIA Security+ certification training and examination for selected participants.

(e) Coordinating with state, federal, and private sector partners to facilitate placement of graduates in high-demand cybersecurity roles.

(f) Providing access to datasets for statewide cyber assessments, research, and development.

(5) Beginning in the 2026-2027 academic year, the program must be available at all currently NCAE-C-designated state universities and Florida College System institutions.

(6)(a) Beginning January 1, 2027, and annually thereafter through January 1, 2032, the department, using data and analyses provided by Cyber Florida as required by the agreement under subsection (3), shall submit a report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(b) The report must include all of the following:

1. The number of students participating in internships, clearance readiness preparation, and CompTIA Security+ certification programs at each institution.

2. The number of students who have earned CompTIA Security+ certification and the number of students who have completed internship and clearance readiness milestones.

3. The number of students who subsequently reported entering federal, state, or private sector cybersecurity positions requiring a federal public trust or national security clearance, and any available data on those positions.

4. Recommendations for program improvements, including potential integration with other state workforce initiatives.

(7) This section expires January 1, 2032.

Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.