



The Florida House of Representatives

Paul Renner
Speaker

NEWS RELEASE

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House Passes Legislation to Improve School Choice Scholarships and Promote Early Learning

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (February 1, 2024) — Today, the Florida House of Representatives voted to pass HB 1361, reaffirming its commitment to support Florida’s students by helping them improve in the all-important subjects of reading and math. The House also voted in favor of HB 1403 to provide the FES-UA program with the ability to grow and meet demand, improve the school choice application and renewal process, ensure timely payment for tuition and fees, and increase transparency.

“Florida is the undisputed leader in school choice and is laser-focused on improving education outcomes. Bills like these bring innovative solutions to create new and better educational opportunities for our students,” said Speaker Paul Renner (R-Palm Coast). “I commend the bill sponsors for identifying areas in which we can deliver better results and presenting comprehensive solutions to the benefit of every Florida student.”

House Bill 1361 by Representative John Temple:

- Expands New Worlds Scholarship eligibility to include VPK students who exhibit substantial deficiencies in early literacy or math skills based on the most recent progress monitoring assessment
- Encourages parental involvement by ensuring they receive notification about the process to request and receive a scholarship
- Creates a tutoring program administered by a nonprofit scholarship funding organization to provide tutoring to K-5 students who exhibit a substantial deficiency in reading or math skills
- Provides stipends for in-person tutoring during, before, or after school, or during a summer program
- Provides opportunities to customize and accelerate learning for students in grades 6-12 and reduce teacher workloads by creating a grant program to expand the use of AI in schools

“Deficiencies in a student’s reading and math skills must be caught early, so that proper intervention and resources can be provided to build a strong foundation and set them up for a successful academic future,” said Representative John Temple (R-Wildwood). “I’m proud to have sponsored this bill giving students, parents, and teachers the resources they need to help all children reach their full potential.”

House Bill 1403 by Representative Josie Tomkow:

- Increases the growth rate of the FES-UA scholarship program cap from 3 to 5 percent and includes an automatic 1 percent increase based on demand
- Improves efficiency by establishing separate application and renewal deadlines so renewals can be funded earlier
- Requires timely payment by a scholarship funding organization (SFO) for full-time tuition and fees to occur within 7 business days of approval by the parent and school
- Increases SFO transparency and stakeholder involvement by requiring them to report on performance metrics on applications and reimbursement requests and to solicit feedback from parents, private schools, and providers before substantially modifying the reimbursement process
- Repeals the scholarship funding portion of the Hope Scholarship Program, but maintains notice requirements for parents, whose students were subjected to incidents like bullying or harassment, of the opportunity to enroll at another public school or receive a scholarship to attend an eligible private school under the Family Empowerment Scholarship (FES) and Florida Tax Credit (FTC) scholarship programs
- Authorizes a charitable organization to apply at any time to be recognized as an SFO and participate in the state scholarship programs

“We must ensure the timely and efficient distribution of education funding so that every child in Florida can access the unique learning opportunities they need and deserve,” said Representative Josie Tomkow (R-Polk City). “I am proud to work alongside Speaker Renner and my House colleagues to deliver on our promise to ensure every child can succeed in the classroom.”

For more information on House Bills 1361 and 1403, visit www.myfloridahouse.gov.

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