

Choice & Innovation Subcommittee

Tuesday, March 11, 2014 12:30 PM – 2:30 PM 306 HOB

Meeting Packet

Committee Meeting Notice HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Choice & Innovation Subcommittee

Start Date and Time:

Tuesday, March 11, 2014 12:30 pm

End Date and Time:

Tuesday, March 11, 2014 02:30 pm

Location:

306 HOB

Duration:

2.00 hrs

Consideration of the following proposed committee bill(s):

PCB CIS 14-02 -- Personal Learning Accounts for Exceptional Students

Pursuant to rule 7.12, the deadline for amendments to bills on the agenda by a member who is not a member of the subcommittee shall be 6:00 pm, Monday, March 10, 2014.

By request of the Chair, all subcommittee members are asked to have amendments to bills on the agenda submitted by 6:00 pm, Monday, March 10, 2014.

NOTICE FINALIZED on 03/07/2014 15:53 by Flynn.Kaley

03/10/2014 1:39:35PM Leagis ® Page 1 of 1



AGENDA

Choice & Innovation Subcommittee Tuesday, March 11, 2014 12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. 306 HOB

- I. Call to Order/Roll Call
- II. Opening Remarks
- III. PCB CIS 14-02 Personal Learning Accounts for Exceptional Students
- IV. Closing Remarks and Adjournment



PCB Name: PCB CIS 14-02 (2014)

Amendment No. 1

	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	WITHDRAWN (Y/N)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
1	Committee/Subcommittee hearing PCB: Choice & Innovation
2	Subcommittee
3	Representative Bileca offered the following:
4	
5	Amendment (with title amendment)
6	Remove lines 266-277
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11	TITLE AMENDMENT
12	Remove lines 24-26 and insert:
13	organizations;
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PCB CIS 14-02 a1

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PCB Name: PCB CIS 14-02

Amendment No. 2

COMMITTEE/SUBCOMMI	TTEE 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WITHDRAWN	(Y/N)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 PCB: Choice & Innovation

Subcommittee

Representative Bileca offered the following:

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Amendment (with title amendment)

Remove lines 223-241 and insert:

- (5) OBLIGATIONS OF ELIGIBLE NONPROFIT SCHOLARSHIP FUNDING ORGANIZATIONS.—A scholarship funding organization participating in the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program under s. 1002.395 may establish Personal Learning Accounts for eligible students. A scholarship funding organization must:
- (a) Receive applications and determine student eligibility in accordance with the requirements of this section. Once an application is approved, the scholarship funding organization must provide the department with information on the student to enable the school district to report the student for funding in accordance with subsection (8). An eligible scholarship funding

PCB CIS 14-02 a2

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PCB Name: PCB CIS 14-02 (2014)

Amendment No. 2

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organization may charge up to a \$25 fee to the parent of an eligible student to establish the Personal Learning Account, but may not receive any other fees.

- (b) Establish and maintain separate accounts for each eligible student.
- (c) Verify qualifying expenditures prior to the receipt of the quarterly distribution by the department.
- (d) Return any unused funds to the department when a student is no longer eligible for a Personal Learning Account.
- (e) Provide to the Auditor General and the department an annual financial and compliance audit of its accounts and records conducted by an independent certified public accountant and in accordance with rules adopted by the Auditor General. The audit must be conducted in compliance with generally accepted auditing standards and must include a report on financial statements presented in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles set forth by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants for not-for-profit organizations and a determination of compliance with requirements in this section. Audits must be provided to the Auditor General and the Department of Education within 180 days after completion of the scholarship-funding organization's fiscal year. If a scholarship funding organization does not submit an annual audit, the Auditor General shall conduct the audit required by this paragraph.

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(f) Prepare and submit quarterly reports to the department pursuant to paragraph (6)(f). In addition, a scholarship-funding organization must submit in a timely manner any information requested by the department relating to the Personal Learning Account program.

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TITLE AMENDMENT

Remove lines 18-19 and insert: applications for accounts, funding and administration of accounts, annual audits, and quarterly reporting; specifying Department of

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #:

PCB CIS 14-02

Personal Learning Accounts for Exceptional Students

SPONSOR(S): Choice & Innovation Subcommittee

TIED BILLS:

IDEN./SIM. BILLS:

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
Orig. Comm.: Choice & Innovation Subcommittee		Beagle GB	Fudge

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

State law provides a wide range of educational choice options that parents and students may choose from. The John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program (McKay program) is the only one of these options created specifically to serve students with disabilities. The McKay program provides scholarships for eligible students with disabilities to attend an eligible public or private school of their choice. For some students with disabilities, a full-day program at school may not meet the educational needs of the student. Parents of these students might be better served by more flexibility to customize their child's education.

The bill establishes the Florida Personal Learning Account program (account) to provide parents of students with disabilities such flexibility. To be eligible for an account, a student must:

- Be a Florida resident;
- Be eligible to enroll in kindergarten through 5th grade or have received an account in the previous year;
- Be identified as having autism, cerebral palsy, down syndrome, an intellectual disability, Prader-Willi syndrome, or Spina bifida, or for a student in kindergarten, as a high-risk child; and
- Have an individual educational plan (IEP) and be eligible for Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) matrix support levels IV or V.

The parent may then use funds from the account to obtain reimbursement for educational services provided to the student. Parents may be reimbursed for educational services from a private school, private tutoring, virtual education, curriculum, educational evaluations, therapy services, application fees, and specialized instructional services consistent with the IEP. Funds remaining after educational services are purchased may be used for other medical services for the student.

Account funding is calculated using the same calculation as the McKay Scholarship program. School districts must report the student for FEFP funding. The Department of Education (DOE) must deduct the account amount from the district's FEFP allocation and transfer the funding quarterly to an SFO. The SFO must maintain separate accounts for each eligible student, verify qualifying expenditures, and reimburse the parent for eligible services provided to the student. When requesting reimbursement for services, the parent must submit receipts or other relevant supporting documentation and an affidavit stating compliance with expenditure requirements.

All service providers must be approved by DOE and the student's educational progress must be evaluated annually in a manner that is identical to the home education law. SFOs are audited annually and must submit quarterly reports to DOE.

The fiscal impact on state government is estimated at \$8.8 million. See Fiscal Analysis & Economic Impact Statement.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2014.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Present Situation

Education of Students with Disabilities

The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act provides (IDEA) grants to assist states in providing a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to all children with disabilities residing in the state aged three to 21.¹ A FAPE must include special education services that are provided by the public school system at no cost to the parent, which meet the standards of the state and are in conformity with the student's individual educational plan (IEP).²

In Florida, children with disabilities are referred to as exceptional students. The disabilities that qualify a student as exceptional are an intellectual disability; autism spectrum disorder; a speech impairment; a language impairment; an orthopedic or other health impairment; a traumatic brain injury; a visual impairment; an emotional or behavioral disability; a specific learning disability, including dyslexia, dyscalculia, or developmental aphasia; deafness, hard of hearing, or dual sensory impairment; or developmental delays from birth through five years old or if the student is hospitalized or homebound.³

Special education services are specially designed instruction and related services necessary for an exceptional student to benefit from education. Such services may include transportation; diagnostic and evaluation services; social services; physical and occupational therapy; speech and language pathology services; job placement; orientation and mobility training; braillists, typists, and readers for the blind; interpreters and auditory amplification; services provided by a certified listening and spoken language specialist; rehabilitation counseling; transition services; mental health services; guidance and career counseling; specified materials, assistive technology devices, and other specialized equipment; and other such services identified in State Board of Education rules.⁴

Students may be referred for an evaluation for exceptional student education (ESE) services by their parents or by school staff and evaluations must be completed within 60 days of such referral. With few exceptions, prior to referring a student for evaluation as a student with a disability, school districts must conduct classroom observations; vision and hearing screenings; review anecdotal, social, psychological, medical, and achievement data; and use a problem solving/response to instruction or intervention (PS/RtI) method to develop and implement evidenced based general education interventions to address the student's academic or behavioral issues. If the school-based team determines that general education interventions are not sufficiently effective, a referral for evaluation is made. A student may not be evaluated for ESE eligibility without the prior informed consent of the parent. A team of professionals and the student's parent (i.e., eligibility staffing committee) review the evaluation results to determine if the student meets the requirements for eligibility under one or more state board rules and if there is evidence of a need for special education and related services.

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¹ 20 U.S.C. s.1400 et. seq., as amended by P.L. 108-446; 34 C.F.R. s. 300.17.

² 34 C.F.R. s. 300.17 and 34 C.F.R. s. 300.34 (a); rules 6A-6.03028(1) and 6A-6.03411(1)(p), F.A.C.

³ Sections 1003.01(3)(a) and 1003.21(1)(e), F.S.

⁴ Section 1003.01(3)(b), F.S.

⁵ Section 1003.57(1)(c), F.S.; rule 6A-6.0331(3), F.A.C.

⁶ For children below mandatory school attendance age and who are not yet enrolled in kindergarten, the general education intervention requirements are not applicable. However, these children are required to have existing social, psychological, and medical data reviewed with a health screening, if necessary; and vision and hearing screenings are required to rule out sensory deficits. Additional screenings may be conducted, if warranted. Rule 6A-6.0331(2), F.A.C.

⁷ Rule 6A-6.0331(1), (3), and (6), F.A.C.

⁸ Rule 6A-6.0331(3)-(6), F.A.C. **STORAGE NAME**: pcb02.CIS.DOCX

If a student is found eligible for an ESE program, an IEP is developed for the student. An IEP team must meet to develop a plan to address the student's needs. 10 The multidisciplinary team includes school and district staff, and other experts who have knowledge or expertise regarding the student, if necessary. 11 Parents also participate in the development of the plans, which may not be implemented until the parent provides consent for initial placement in the ESE program. 12 The IEP must be completed within 30 calendar days following the determination of a student's eligibility for special education services. 13 An IEP must be reviewed at least annually, and may be revised if necessary. 14

A FAPE must be provided in the least restrictive environment (LRE). To be in compliance with the LRE requirement, states must educate students with disabilities with their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. Special classes, special schooling, or other removal of the student from the regular education environment should only occur if the nature and severity of his or her disability is such that an appropriate education in regular classes cannot be achieved satisfactorily. 15 IDEA authorizes instruction to be provided in one or more of the following settings:

- Regular class.
- Special class.
- Special day school or residential school.
- Special class in a hospital or facility operated by a noneducational agency.
- Individual instruction in a hospital.
- Home instruction. 16

The LRE must be considered during the development of the student's IEP.¹⁷

Funding for Students with Disabilities

Services for exceptional education students are funded primarily through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) using basic funding, an ESE Guaranteed Allocation, and two weighted cost factors. FEFP funds are calculated by multiplying the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students in each of the funded education programs by the cost factors to obtain weighted FTE students. Weighted FTE students are then multiplied by a base student allocation and by a district cost differential. Program cost factors are determined by the Legislature and represent relative cost differences among the FEFP programs. Generally speaking, funding generated by a particular exceptional student reflects the severity of his or her disability and resulting educational needs.¹⁸

Exceptional education cost factors are determined by using a matrix of services to document the services that each exceptional student will receive. In order to generate funds using one of the two weighted cost factors, a matrix of services must be completed at the time of the student's initial placement into an exceptional student education program and at least once every three years. 19 The program cost factors for exceptional students for use in the 2013-14 academic year are:

- Kindergarten and Grades 1, 2 and 3 with ESE Services -- cost factor 1.125.
- Grades 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 with ESE Services -- cost factor 1.000.

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⁹ Rule 6A-6.03028(3), F.A.C.

¹⁰ Rules 6A-6.03028(3), F.A.C.

¹¹ Rules 6A-6.03028(3)(c), F.A.C.

¹² Rule 6A-6.0331(4) and (9), F.A.C.

¹³ Rule 6A-6.03028(3)(f), F.A.C.

¹⁴ Rule 6A-6.6.03028(3)(j), F.A.C.

¹⁵ 34 C.F.R. s. 300.114(a)(2); s. 1003.57(1)(a), F.S.; rule 6A-6.03028(3)(i), F.A.C.

¹⁶ 34 C.F.R. ss. 300.103, 300.104, 300.114, 300.115, and 300.116; s. 1003.57(1)(a), F.S.; rule 6A-6.03028(3)(i), F.A.C.

¹⁷ L.G. et.al. v. School Bd. Of Palm Beach County, Fla., 512 F. Supp.2d 1240, 1247-1249 (S.D. Fla. 2007).

¹⁸ Section 1011.62(1), F.S.; Florida Department of Education, 2013-14 Funding for Florida School Districts, at 1, 13-14, and 19 (2013), available at http://www.fldoe.org/fefp/pdf/fefpdist.pdf [hereinafter 2013-14 Funding for Florida School Districts].

¹⁹ Section 1011.62(1)(e)a.-b., F.S.

- Grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 with ESE Services -- cost factor 1.011.
- Support Level 4 -- cost factor 3.558.
- Support Level 5 -- cost factor 5.089.²⁰

ESE services for students below Support Levels 4 and 5 are considered basic programs and are assigned the same cost factor weighting as regular education students. These students generate FTE funding using the appropriate basic program weight for their grade level and the ESE Guaranteed Allocation provides for the additional services needed by these students. Students funded at support Levels 4 and 5 have more severe disabilities and, therefore, receive greater weighting.²¹

McKay Scholarship Funding

The John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program (McKay Program) provides scholarships for eligible students with disabilities to attend an eligible public or private school of their choice. The maximum scholarship granted for an eligible student is equivalent to the base student allocation in the FEFP multiplied by the appropriate cost factor for the educational program that would have been provided for the student in the district school to which he or she was assigned, multiplied by the district cost differential. In addition, a share of the ESE guaranteed allocation is added to this amount based on the calculation for the ESE guaranteed allocation provided in the 2000 General Appropriations Act. The calculation is based upon the student's grade level, matrix level of services, and the difference between the FY 2000-2001 basic program and the appropriate level of services cost factor, multiplied by the FY 2000-2001 base student allocation and the FY 2000-2001 district cost differential for the sending district. The calculated amount includes the per-student share of supplemental academic instruction funds, instructional materials funds, technology funds, and other categorical funds. The calculation is based upon the school district in which the parent resides at the time of the scholarship request.²³

Each student's scholarship is either the calculated amount or the amount of the private school's tuition and fees, whichever is less.²⁴ Each school district must report scholarship recipients attending a private school to DOE, separately from other students.²⁵ DOE must transfer, from General Revenue funds only, the applicable scholarship amount from the school district's total FEFP funding entitlement and categorical accounts to a separate account for the scholarship program for quarterly disbursement (on July 1, September 1, December 1, or February 1) to the parents of participating students.²⁶

Parents of students entering the scholarship program must submit to DOE all documentation required for the student's participation, including the private school's and the student's fee schedules, at least 30 days before the first quarterly scholarship payment is made for the student.²⁷ Upon notification from DOE that this documentation has been received, the Chief Financial Officer must make scholarship payments in four equal amounts no later than the quarterly transfer dates. The initial payment is made after DOE verification of admission acceptance, and subsequent payments are made upon verification of continued enrollment and attendance at the private school. Payment must be by individual warrant made payable to the student's parent and mailed by DOE to the private school of the parent's choice, and the parent must restrictively endorse the warrant to the private school for deposit into the account

²⁰ Section 1011.62(1)(c) and (e), F.S.

²¹ *Id*.

²² Section 1002.39(1), F.S.

²³ Section 1002.39(10)(a), F.S. Until the school district completes the matrix of services, the calculation is based on the matrix that assigns the student to support level I of service as it existed prior to the 2000-2001 school year. When the school district completes the matrix, the amount of the payment is adjusted as needed. The scholarship amount for a student eligible under s. 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is based upon the student's existing FEFP program cost factor. *Id*.

²⁴ Section 1002.39(10)(b), F.S. The amount of any assessment fee required by the participating private school may be paid from the total amount of the scholarship. *Id*.

²⁵ Section 1002.39(10)(c), F.S.

²⁶ Section 1002.39(10)(d), F.S.

²⁷ *Id*.

of the private school.²⁸ Subsequent to each scholarship payment, DOE must request from the Department of Financial Services a sample of endorsed warrants to review and confirm compliance with endorsement requirements.²⁹

Scholarship Funding Organizations

The Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program (FTC Program)³⁰ was established to encourage taxpayers to make private, voluntary contributions to non-profit scholarship-funding organizations (SFOs), expand educational opportunities for families that have limited financial resources, and enable Florida's children to achieve a greater level of excellence in their education.³¹ The FTC Program provides a tax credit to taxpayers that contribute to SFOs. SFOs use these contributions to award scholarships to eligible lowincome students for private school tuition and fees or transportation expenses to a Florida public school located outside of the school district in which the student resides.³²

Eligible nonprofit SFOs are charitable organizations that are exempt from the federal income tax³³ with their principal offices located within the state. Florida law specifies several ethical and accountability requirements for SFOs. Among other things, SFOs must:

- Comply with federal law³⁴ prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, or national origin by any program receiving federal financial assistance.
- Require owners and operators to submit to a Level 2 background screening³⁵ upon employment or engagement of services and every five years thereafter. Owners or operators that fail the Level 2 background screening are ineligible to provide scholarships.
- Not own or operate a private school that is participating in the FTC Program.
- Not restrict or reserve scholarships for use at a particular private school or provide a scholarship to the child of an owner or operator.
- Maintain separate accounts for scholarship and operating funds.
- Provide the Auditor General and DOE with an annual financial and compliance audit of its accounts and records conducted by an independent certified public accountant.
- Prepare and submit quarterly reports to DOE. 36

Step Up for Students is currently the only SFO authorized to award FTC scholarships. DOE has approved A.A.A. Scholarship Foundation, Life is Energy Scholarship Foundation, and Rotary Club of Spring Hill Scholarship Fund to begin funding scholarships in the the 2014-15 school year.³

Home Education Student Evaluations

Among other things, the parent of a student enrolled in a home education program must keep a log of educational instruction and services that is made contemporaneously with delivery of the instruction and services and samples of any writings, worksheets, workbooks, or creative materials used or developed by the student. The portfolio must be preserved by the parent for two years and made

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²⁸ Section 1002.39(10)(e), F.S.

²⁹ Section 1002.39(10)(f), F.S.

³⁰ Section 1002.395, F.S.

³¹ Section 1002.395(1)(b), F.S.

³² Section 1002.395(3), (5), and (6)(d), F.S. An eligible contribution is a monetary contribution from a taxpayer to an eligible nonprofit SFO. The taxpayer may not designate a specific child as the beneficiary of the contribution. Section 1002.395(2)(e), F.S. 33 Section 1002.395(2)(f), F.S.; see 26 U.S.C. s. 501(c)(3) and chs. 607, 608, and 617, F.S.

³⁴ See 42 U.S.C. s. 2000d.

³⁵ Level 2 background screening requires individuals to be screened against a statutorily prescribed list of 51 offenses. See s. 435.04, F.S.

³⁶ Section 1002.395(6)(a)-(n), F.S.

³⁷ Florida Department of Education, FTC Program Scholarship Funding Organizations, https://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/ctc/SFO.asp (last visited March 6, 2014).

available for inspection by the district school superintendent, or designee, upon 15 days' written notice.³⁸

Additionally, the parent of a home education student must provide for an annual educational evaluation which documents the student's demonstration of educational progress at a level commensurate with his or her ability, which may include:

- Evaluation of the student's work portfolio by a certified teacher selected by the parent;
- Any nationally normed student achievement test administered by a certified teacher;
- A statewide, standardized assessment administered by a certified teacher, at a location and under testing conditions approved by the school district;
- Evaluation by licensed psychologist or school psychologist; or
- Any other valid measurement tool mutually agreed upon by the district school superintendent of the district in which the student resides and the student's parent.³⁹

The district school superintendent must review and accept the results of the annual educational evaluation. If a student fails to make educational progress, the superintendent must notify his or her parent in writing. The parent has one year from the date of receipt of such notice to provide remedial instruction to the student. If the student, upon reevaluation, does not demonstrate educational progress at the end of the probationary period, the home education program must be discontinued.⁴⁰

Regular School Attendance

The law requires all children who have attained the age of six years or who will have attained the age of six years by February 1 of any school year or who are older than six years of age but who have not attained the age of 16 years, to attend school.⁴¹ Each parent of a child within the compulsory attendance age is responsible for the child's school attendance.⁴² Compliance with compulsory school attendance requirements, i.e., "regular school attendance," may be achieved by attendance in:

- A public school;
- A private, parochial, religious, or denominational school;
- A home education program; or
- A private tutoring program.⁴³

Effect of Proposed Changes

Student Eligibility

The bill establishes the Florida Personal Learning Account (account) program to enable parents of students with disabilities to customize their child's education using a wide range of instructional services. The parent of a student who resides in this state may request and receive an account if the student is:

- Eligible to enter kindergarten to grade 5 or received an account in the previous school year;
- Identified as having autism,⁴⁴ cerebral palsy,⁴⁵ down syndrome,⁴⁶ an intellectual disability,⁴⁷
 Prader-Willi syndrome,⁴⁸ or Spina bifida,⁴⁹ or for a student in kindergarten, as a high-risk child,⁵⁰

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³⁸ Section 1002.41(1)(b), F.S.

³⁹ Section 1002.41(1)(c), F.S.

⁴⁰ Section 1002.41(2), F.S.

⁴¹ Section 1003.21(1), F.S.

⁴² Section 1003.24, F.S.

⁴³ Section 1003.01(13), F.S.

⁴⁴ "Autism" means a pervasive, neurologically based developmental disability of extended duration which causes severe learning, communication, and behavior disorders with age of onset during infancy or childhood. Section 393.063(3), F.S.

by the school district in which he or she resides and the district has completed an IEP written in accordance with rules of the state board; and

Assigned to FEFP matrix support levels IV or V.

At least 60 calendar days prior to one of the payment transfer dates, i.e. May 1, July 1, September 1, or December 1, parents must apply for an account to an eligible SFO. If the student does not already have a qualifying IEP, the parent must request that the school district in which he or she resides evaluate the student and prepare an IEP, which must be completed within 30 calendar days. Upon completion of the IEP, the school district must provide the parent with an estimate of the amount of funds the student may receive in the account. Once a student is determined to be eligible for an account, the SFO establishes an account for the student. The parent must register the student's participation in an account with the school district, which participation satisfies regular school attendance requirements. School districts are not responsible for providing a FAPE to a student who receives an account, unless the student enrolls in public school. Such a student is treated as a unilateral parent placement for purposes of state and federal law, excluding preparation of the IEP.

Allowable Expenditures

Parents first procure allowable services for the student and then must apply for reimbursement of expenses. Expenditures are reimbursed only after the SFO verifies the expenditure was made in compliance with the program. Funds from the account may be used for:

- Specialized instructional services consistent with the student's IEP.
- Tuition and fees for instructional services from a private school that is eligible to participate in the McKay Program or FTC Program.
- Private tutoring.
- Curriculum.
- Tuition and fees for virtual instruction⁵¹ or DOE-approved online courses.⁵²
- Costs for annual home education evaluation.
- The \$25 scholarship application fee.
- Services such as applied behavior analysis, speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, or physical therapy.
- Medical services prescribed by a licensed physician, if funds remain in the account after the
 purchase of educational services necessary to meet the student's educational needs, provided
 that such medical services are related to the student's disability.

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⁴⁵ Cerebral palsy is a group of disabling symptoms of extended duration which results from damage to the developing brain that may occur before, during, or after birth and results in loss or impairment of control over voluntary muscles. Section. 393.063(4), F.S. ⁴⁶ Down syndrome is a disorder caused by the presence of an extra chromosome 21. Section 393.063(13), F.S.

⁴⁷ Intellectual disability is significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior which manifests before the age of 18 and can reasonably be expected to continue indefinitely. Section 393.063(21), F.S. ⁴⁸ Prader-Willi syndrome is an inherited condition typified by neonatal hypotonia with failure to thrive, hyperphagia or an excessive drive to eat which leads to obesity usually at 18 to 36 months of age, mild to moderate intellectual disability, hypogonadism, short stature, mild facial dysmorphism, and a characteristic neurobehavior. Section 393.063(25), F.S.

⁴⁹ Spina bifida is a a medical diagnosis of spina bifida cystica or myelomeningocele. Section 393.063(36), F.S.

⁵⁰ A high-risk child is a child from 3 to 5 years of age with a developmental delay in cognition, language, or physical development. Section 393.063(20)(a), F.S.

⁵¹ Participating students may enroll in virtual instruction provided by a DOE approved virtual instruction provider or the Florida Virtual School. *See* ss. 1002.45 and 1002.37, F.S.

⁵² Two types of approved online course may be used under the bill- Florida approved courses and college credit for online courses. Florida approved courses include massive open online courses (MOOC) or remedial education associated with courses measured by statewide assessments approved by DOE. MOOCs may be authorized in Algebra I, biology, geometry, and civics. Such course may be used to satisfy promotion or high school graduation requirements. *See* s. 1003.499, F.S. Beginning in the 2015-2016 school year, students will be able to earn college credit for online courses, including MOOCs, prior to initial enrollment at a postsecondary institution. *See* s. 1004.0961, F.S.

Specialized instructional service providers must be approved by DOE, be providing services through the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, or be authorized to provide services to students with disabilities enrolled in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education program.

Account Funding

Funding is calculated using the same calculation as the McKay program. School districts must report the student for FEFP funding. DOE must deduct the account amount from the districts' FEFP allocation and transfer the funding quarterly to an SFO. The SFO must maintain separate accounts for each eligible student, verify qualifying expenditures, and reimburse the parent for eligible services provided to the student. When requesting reimbursement for services, the parent must submit receipts or other relevant supporting documentation and an affidavit stating compliance with expenditure requirements.

Any unused funds are rolled over to the next fiscal year, unless the student returns to public school, is determined ineligible for the program based upon reevaluation of the IEP or an annual evaluation of educational progress, graduates from high school, or attains age 22, whichever occurs first. If an account is terminated, remaining funds revert to the state.

Program Accountability

The SFO must verify that expenditures are permissible before reimbursing parents for such services. Participating SFOs must submit quarterly reports to DOE regarding students served, services reimbursed, and providers used. SFOs must be audited annually by the Auditor General. DOE must approve instructional services providers, monitor program compliance, and establish a complaint process and adjudicate complaints. The bill requires participating students to undergo an annual educational evaluation that is similar to that required for home education students. Parents must participate in IEP reviews and may not receive any rebate or refund from service providers. The state is not liable for any claim arising from the award or use of an account.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1. Creates s. 1002.411, F.S., relating to Florida Personal Learning Accounts.

Section 2. Amends s. 1003.01(13), F.S., relating to the definitions of "regular school attendance."

Section 3. Amends s. 11.45, F.S., relating to Auditor General duties.

Section 4. Provides an effective date of July 1, 2014.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

Because there is little to no data available on home school or private school children who might qualify for a Personal Learning Account under the bill, assumptions were made based upon the number of students in public school that would meet the criteria to qualify for an account. That ratio of qualified students was then applied to the total home school population of 75,801 and the private school population of 320,423. The private school population was then adjusted for the students currently receiving funding through the McKay Program. Based upon this methodology, the number of qualified home school students in kindergarten through 5th grade is estimated at 432 at an

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estimated cost of \$5.2 million. The number of qualified private school students in kindergarten through 5th grade is 300 at an estimated cost of \$3.6 million. Thus, the total estimated cost of the program is \$8.8 million. These costs were based on an average of the actual 2012-13 McKay Program payments made for the students that would be eligible to receive an account.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

SFOs may charge parents of participating student a \$25 application fee.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

Not Applicable. This bill does not appear to affect county or municipal governments.

2. Other:

In *Bush v. Holmes*, the Florida Supreme Court distinguished other publicly funded educational choice programs, such as a program designed to meet the unique educational needs of students with disabilities, from the Opportunity Scholarship Program, which it found unconstitutional.⁵³

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

The bill directs the State Board of Education to adopt rules to implement the Florida Personal Learning Account program, including any rules necessary to coordinate the respective responsibilities of DOE, district school boards, and SFOs regarding the funding and administration of accounts; criteria, timelines, and a reporting format for quarterly reports by SFOs; and a standard application form to be used by parents and SFOs.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/ COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES

Not applicable.

⁵³ Bush v. Holmes, 919 So.2d 392, 412 (Fla. 2006).

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DATE: 3/7/2014

1 A bill to be entitled 2 An act relating to Personal Learning Accounts; creating s. 1002.411; establishing the Florida 3 Personal Learning Account program; defining terms; 4 5 providing student eligibility criteria for an account; 6 providing parent and student responsibilities; 7 specifying allowable expenditures of account funds; 8 requiring an annual evaluation of each participating 9 student's educational progress; specifying that parents are responsible for procuring educational 10 11 services for a participating student; specifying that 12 school districts are not obligated to provide a free 13 appropriate public education for participating students; prohibiting participating students from 14 15 having multiple accounts or participating in school 16 choice scholarship programs; specifying duties of 17 scholarship funding organizations regarding student 18 applications for accounts and funding and administration of accounts; specifying Department of 19 20 Education duties regarding approved service providers, oversight of scholarship funding organizations, 21 22 investigation and adjudication of complaints, and 23 quarterly reporting by scholarship funding 24 organizations; requiring the Auditor General to 25 conduct annual financial and operational audits of participating scholarship funding organizations; 26

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specifying school district duties regarding initial evaluations and individual educational plan development and reevaluation; requiring each district school superintendent to review the annual educational evaluations of each participating student; specifying requirements for funding accounts; providing a calculation for funding accounts; requiring school districts to report participating students to the department for funding; specifying quarterly payment transfer dates and requiring quarterly transfer of funds by the department to scholarship funding organizations; providing that funds remaining in an account at the end of a fiscal year roll over to the next fiscal year; specifying the conditions in which an account is terminated; providing that funds remaining in an account revert to the state upon termination; exempting the state from liability regarding the awarding or use of accounts; requiring rulemaking; amending s. 1003.01(13); revising the definition of regular school attendance to add participation in an account as a method of satisfying regular school attendance; amending s. 11.45, revising the duties of the Auditor General to include annual audits of scholarship funding organizations that administer accounts; providing an effective date.

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2014

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

Section 1. <u>Section 1002.411</u>, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

1002.411.—Florida Personal Learning Accounts. -

- (1) THE FLORIDA PERSONAL LEARNING ACCOUNT. The Florida

 Personal Learning Account is established to enable parents of

 students with disabilities to customize their child's education

 using a wide range of instructional services.
 - (2) DEFINITIONS. -
- (a) "Approved provider" means a provider of specialized instructional services approved by the department, individuals providing services through the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, and providers approved pursuant to s. 1002.66.
- (b) "Certified teacher" means a teacher who holds a valid Florida professional certificate issued pursuant to s. 1012.56 to teach academic subjects at the elementary or secondary level.
- (c) "Curriculum" means a complete course of study for a particular content area or grade level, including any required supplemental materials.
- (d) "Eligible student" or "participating student" means a student with a disability who is eligible for, or actually participating in, a Personal Learning Account, as applicable.
- (e) "Student with a disability" means a student in kindergarten to grade 5, with autism, as defined in s.

 393.063(3); cerebral palsy, as defined in s. 393.063(4); down

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syndrome, as defined in s. 393.063(13); an intellectual disability, as defined in s. 393.063(21); Prader-Willi syndrome, as defined in s. 393.063(25); Spina bifida, as defined in s. 393.063(36); and for a student in kindergarten, being a high-risk child, as defined in s. 393.063(20)(a).

- (3) FLORIDA PERSONAL LEARNING ACCOUNT ELIGIBILITY. The parent of a student who resides in this state may request and receive a Florida Personal Learning Account if:
- (a) The student is eligible to enter kindergarten to grade

 5 or received a Personal Learning Account established pursuant
 to this section in the previous school year;
- (b) The student has been identified as a student with a disability by the school district in which he or she resides and the district has completed an individual educational plan written in accordance with rules of the State Board of Education; and
- (c) The student is assigned to matrix support level IV or V pursuant to s. 1011.62(1).

For a student who is a first-time applicant, no administrative or judicial proceedings may be pending regarding the contents of the individual educational plan. For a student who is applying to renew a current account, the existence of pending administrative or judicial proceedings about a subsequent individual educational plan does not affect continued eligibility for an account.

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105	(4) PARENT AND STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PROGRAM
106	PARTICIPATION
107	(a) To receive a Personal Learning Account, the parent of
108	an eligible student must:
109	1. No later than 60 days prior to one of the payment
110	transfer dates specified in paragraph (9)(d), submit an
111	application to an eligible scholarship funding organization in
112	order to receive that payment and, if the student does not
113	already have an active individual educational plan, request an
114	evaluation from the school district in which the student
115	resides; and
116	2. Obtain an individual educational plan in accordance
117	with subsection (8) no later than 30 days prior to one of the
118	payment transfer dates specified in paragraph (9)(d) in order to
119	receive that payment.
120	(b) To maintain eligibility in the program the parent of
121	an eligible student must:
122	1. Register the student's participation in a Personal
123	Learning Account with the school district in which the student
124	resides and release the school district from all obligations to
125	educate the student.
126	2 Participate in the initial development of the

- 2. Participate in the initial development of the individual educational plan and annual reevaluation of the plan under subsection (8).
- 3. Submit eligible expenses to the scholarship funding organization designated by the parent for reimbursement of

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qualifying expenditures. Reimbursement requests must be
supported by documentation of services rendered, such as
receipts or invoices, and accompanied by an affidavit signed by
the parent certifying his or her compliance with the
requirements of this section. Eligible expenses include:
a. Specialized instructional services by approved
providers that are consistent with the student's individual
educational plan.
b. Tuition and fees for instructional services from an
eligible private school under s. 1002.39(8) or s. 1002.395(8) to
implement the student's individual educational plan.
c. Private tutoring pursuant to s. 1002.43.
d. Tuition and fees for enrollment in a virtual education
program provided by an approved virtual education provider
pursuant to ss. 1002.37 or 1002.45, or an approved online course
offered pursuant to ss. 1003.499 or 1004.0961.
e. Curriculum.

- f. Costs incurred to comply with the annual education evaluation required in subparagraphs 4.-6.
 - g. The fee authorized by paragraph (5)(a).
- h. Services such as applied behavior analysis as defined in s. 627.6686, speech-language pathology as defined in s. 468.1125, occupational therapy as defined in s. 468.203, and physical therapy as defined in s. 486.021.
- i. Medical services prescribed by a physician licensed pursuant to ch. 458, if funds remain in the account after the

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157	purchase of educational services necessary to meet the student's
158	educational needs, provided that such medical services are
159	related to the student's disability.
160	4. Maintain a portfolio of records and materials that
161	consists of:
162	a. A log of educational instruction and services that is
163	made contemporaneously with delivery of the instruction and
164	services and that designates by title any reading materials
165	used.
166	b. Samples of any writings, worksheets, workbooks, or
167	creative materials used or developed by the student.
168	
169	The portfolio must be preserved by the parent for 2 years and
170	made available for inspection by the district school
171	superintendent, or designee, upon 15 days' written notice.
172	Nothing in this section shall require the district school
173	superintendent to inspect the portfolio.
174	
175	5. Provide for an annual educational evaluation which
176	documents the student's demonstration of educational progress at
177	a level commensurate with his or her ability, which may include:
178	a. Evaluation of the student's work portfolio by a

b. Any nationally normed student achievement test administered by a certified teacher;

c. A statewide, standardized assessment administered by a

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certified teacher selected by the parent;

certified teacher, at a location and under testing conditions
approved by the school district;

- d. Evaluation by an individual holding a valid, active license pursuant to the provisions of s. 490.003(7) or (8); or
- e. Any other valid measurement tool mutually agreed upon by the district school superintendent of the district in which the student resides and the student's parent.
- 6. The district school superintendent must review and accept the results of the annual educational evaluation of a participating student. If the student does not demonstrate educational progress at a level commensurate with his or her ability, the district school superintendent must notify the parent, in writing, that such progress has not been achieved. If the student remains eligible for a Personal Learning Account, the parent has 1 year from the date of receipt of the written notification to provide remedial instruction to the student. At the end of the 1-year probationary period, the student must be reevaluated pursuant to subparagraph 5. Continued participation in a Personal Learning Account is contingent upon the student demonstrating educational progress commensurate with her or his ability at the end of the probationary period.
- (b) Procuring the services necessary to educate the student is the responsibility of the parent. Once the student receives a Personal Learning Account, the district school board is not obligated to provide the student with a free appropriate public education. For purposes of s. 1003.57 and the

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"Individuals with Disabilities Education Act," a participating
student has only those rights that apply to all other
unilaterally parentally placed students, except that, when
requested by the parent, school district personnel must develop
an individual educational plan in accordance with subsection
(8).

- (c) The parent is responsible for the payment of all eligible expenses in excess of the amount in the account in accordance with the terms agreed to between the parent and the providers and may not receive any refund or rebate of any expenditures made in accordance with subparagraph (4)(b)3.
- (d) A student is only eligible for one Personal Learning

 Account and may not receive a scholarship under Part III of

 chapter 1002.
- (5) ADMINISTRATION OF PERSONAL LEARNING ACCOUNTS.—A scholarship funding organization participating in the Florida

 Tax Credit Scholarship Program under s. 1002.395 may establish

 Personal Learning Accounts for eligible students by:
- (a) Receiving applications and determining student eligibility in accordance with the requirements of this section. Once an application is approved, the scholarship funding organization must provide the department with information on the student to enable the school district to report the student for funding in accordance with subsection (9). An eligible scholarship funding organization may charge up to a \$25 fee to the parent of an eligible student to establish the Personal

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235	Learning	Account,	but	may	not	receive	any	other	fees

- (b) Establishing and maintaining separate accounts for each eligible student.
- (c) Verifying qualifying expenditures prior to the receipt of the quarterly distribution by the department.
- (d) Returning any unused funds to the department when a student is no longer eligible for a Personal Learning Account.
- (6) DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OBLIGATIONS.— The department must:
 - (a) Maintain a list of approved providers.
- (b) Require each eligible nonprofit scholarship-funding organization to verify eligible expenditures prior to the distribution required by paragraph (8)(c).
- (c) Investigate any written complaint of a violation of this section in accordance with the process established by s. 1002.395(9)(f).
- (d) Notify an eligible nonprofit scholarship-funding organization of any of the organization's identified students who are receiving educational scholarships pursuant to Part III of chapter 1002.
- (e) Notify an eligible nonprofit scholarship-funding organization of any of the organization's identified students who have established a Personal Learning Account with another eligible nonprofit scholarship-funding organization or have been reported for funding by a school district or the Florida Virtual School.

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(f) Require quarterly reports by an eligible nonprofit
scholarship-funding organization regarding the number of
students participating in the program, the providers of services
to students, and other information deemed necessary by the
department.
(7) OBLIGATIONS OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL
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- (a) The Auditor General shall conduct an annual financial and operational audit of accounts and records of each scholarship-funding organization that participates in the Florida Personal Learning Account program. As part of this audit, the Auditor General shall verify, at a minimum, the total amount of students served and eligibility of reimbursements made by each scholarship-funding organization and transmit that information to the department.
- (b) The Auditor General shall notify the department of any scholarship-funding organization that fails to comply with a request for information.
 - (8) SCHOOL DISTRICT OBLIGATIONS; PARENTAL OPTIONS.-
- (a) Upon the request of a parent submitted at least 60 days prior to a payment transfer date specified in paragraph (9)(d), the school district in which the student resides shall conduct an initial evaluation of a student in accordance with s. 1003.57. If a determination is made that the student has a disability and needs special education and related services, an individual educational plan must be developed.
 - (b) Evaluations and individual educational plans must be

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completed within the timeframes set forth in rules of the state
board. If the student has been identified as a student with a
disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
pursuant to a current evaluation team report, but the student
does not have an individual educational plan because the student
is not currently enrolled in a public school, the school
district shall prepare an individual educational plan for the
student.

- (c) Upon completion of a student's individual educational plan, the school district shall provide the parent with an estimate of the approximate amount of funds the student may receive in a Personal Learning Account.
- (d) The school district in which an eligible student resides must:
- 1. Review the annual educational evaluation submitted pursuant to subparagraphs (4)(b)4.-6.; and
- 2. Reevaluate the individual educational plan of each student with a Personal Learning Account annually in consultation with the personnel of providers of the services selected by the parent for the student under subparagraph (4) (b) 3.
- (e) The school district developing the individual educational plan is not obligated to provide a participating student with a free appropriate public education.
- (f) If, at any time, a parent of a participating student decides to return the student to the school district, the school

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313 <u>district must provide the student with a free appropriate public</u> 314 education.

- (9) PERSONAL LEARNING ACCOUNT FUNDING AND PAYMENT.-
- (a) The maximum amount granted for an eligible student with disabilities shall be calculated in accordance with s. 1002.39(10)(a).
- (b) The school district shall report all students who are receiving a Personal Learning Account to the department for funding. These students must be reported separately from other students reported for purposes of the Florida Education Finance Program.
- (c) Following notification on July 1, September 1,

 December 1, or February 1 of the number of program participants,
 the department shall transfer, from General Revenue funds only,
 the amount calculated under paragraph (a) from the school
 district's total funding entitlement under the Florida Education
 Finance Program and from authorized categorical accounts to a
 separate account for the scholarship program for quarterly
 disbursement to the scholarship funding organization for
 participating students.
- (d) After the department verifies the establishment of an account for a participating student by the scholarship funding organization, the department shall make payments to the scholarship funding organization selected by the parent in four equal amounts no later than September 1, November 1, February 1, and April 1 of each academic year in which the account is in

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- (e) Any funds remaining in a Personal Learning Account for an eligible student are carried forward to the next fiscal year until termination of the account. A Personal Learning Account shall be terminated if the student enrolls in and is reported for funding in any public educational program under s.

 1000.04(1), (3), and (4); is determined ineligible for an account under subparagraphs (4)(b)6. or (8)(d)2.; graduates from high school; or reaches 22 years of age, whichever occurs first.

 Once an account is terminated all remaining funds revert to the state.
- (10) LIABILITY.—No liability shall arise on the part of the state based on the award or use of a Personal Learning Account.
- (11) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules pursuant to ss. 120.536(1) and 120.54 to implement this section, including any rules necessary to coordinate the respective responsibilities of the department, district school boards, and scholarship funding organizations regarding the funding and administration of accounts; criteria, timelines, and a reporting format for quarterly reports by scholarship funding organizations; and a standard application form to be used by parents and scholarship funding organizations.

 Section 2. Subsection (13) of section 1003.01, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

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365	1003.01 Definitions.—As used in this chapter, the term:
366	(13) "Regular school attendance" means the actual
367	attendance of a student during the school day as defined by law
368	and rules of the State Board of Education. Regular attendance
369	within the intent of s. 1003.21 may be achieved by attendance
370	in :
371	(a) Attendance in a public school supported by public
372	funds;
373	(b) Attendance in a parochial, religious, or
374	denominational school;
375	(c) Attendance in a private school supported in whole or
376	in part by tuition charges or by endowments or gifts;
377	(d) Participation in a home education program under s.
378	1002.41 that meets the requirements of chapter 1002; or
379	(e) Attendance in a private tutoring program under s.
380	1002.43 that meets the requirements of chapter 1002; or
381	(f) Participation in a Personal Learning Account under s.
382	1002.411.
383	Section 3. Paragraph (k) is added to subsection (2) and
884	paragraph (y) is added to subsection (3) of section 11.45,
885	Florida Statutes, to read:
386	11.45 Definitions; duties; authorities; reports; rules
387	(2) DUTIES.—The Auditor General shall:
888	(k) Annually conduct financial and operational audits of
389	all scholarship-funding organizations participating in the
an	Dersonal Learning Account program established by s 1002 411

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The Auditor General shall perform his or her duties independently but under the general policies established by the Legislative Auditing Committee. This subsection does not limit the Auditor General's discretionary authority to conduct other audits or engagements of governmental entities as authorized in subsection (3).

- (3) AUTHORITY FOR AUDITS AND OTHER ENGAGEMENTS.—The Auditor General may, pursuant to his or her own authority, or at the direction of the Legislative Auditing Committee, conduct audits or other engagements as determined appropriate by the Auditor General of:
- (y) The accounts and records of any scholarship-funding organization participating in the Personal Learning Account program established by s. 1002.411.
 - Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2014.

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