

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: PCB KTS 15-02 Standard Student Attire

SPONSOR(S): K-12 Subcommittee

TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:**

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
Orig. Comm.: K-12 Subcommittee		Brink	Fudge

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

The K-12 Subcommittee held four meetings to discuss efforts to increase academic outcomes for students. The discussions included the respective roles of district school boards, superintendents, and school principals. Presenters identified various factors that affect student outcomes such as attendance, discipline and academic intervention for students at risk of dropping out. A consistent theme from these discussions was the important role of a safe and supporting learning environment or the school's climate. Several school districts testified that school uniforms, or standard student attire, was effective at creating a safe and supportive environment by minimizing discipline problems and thereby enabling students to focus on academics. Current law authorizes district school boards to adopt policies requiring school uniforms if the district school board finds that such policies are necessary for the safety and welfare of the student body or school personnel.

The bill creates the "Students Attired for Education (SAFE) Act" and enumerates the benefits of a standard student attire policy and consequently removes the requirement that school boards individually make such findings. The bill encourages district school boards to enact a policy requiring standard student attire in at least kindergarten through eighth grade by providing immunity from civil liability based upon adoption of the policy and providing additional funds to school boards that enact a standard student attire policy. Funding is calculated as up to \$10 per student in kindergarten through eighth grade in qualifying districts.

The bill provides a total of \$10,000,000 for qualifying districts.

The bill is effective upon becoming law.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Current Situation

The K-12 Subcommittee held four meetings to discuss efforts to increase academic outcomes for students. The discussions included the respective roles of district school boards, superintendents, and school principals. During these discussions educational leaders identified various factors that affect student outcomes such as attendance, discipline and academic intervention for students at risk of dropping out. A consistent theme from these discussions was the important role of a safe and supporting learning environment, sometimes referred to as school climate.

Several school districts testified that school uniforms, or standard student attire, are effective at creating a safe and supportive environment by minimizing discipline problems and enabling students to focus on academics. Current law authorizes district school boards to adopt policies requiring school uniforms if the district school board finds that such policies are necessary for the safety and welfare of the student body or school personnel.

The following school boards have at least a district-wide K-8 standard student attire policy: Alachua, Bay, Jackson, Jefferson, Madison, Osceola, and Polk.

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill revises the authority of school boards to adopt policies requiring school uniforms by removing the requirement that a school board must make a finding that school uniforms are necessary for the safety and welfare of students. The requirement is unnecessary because the bill enumerates some of the benefits of standard student attire which encourages students to express their individuality through personality and academic achievements, not outward appearances; enables students to focus on academics, not fashion, because they are able to project a neat, serious, studious image; minimizes discipline problems because students are not distracted by clothing; minimizes visible differences among students by using clothing that is more economical for parents; reduces time for correcting dress code violations through a readily available inventory of compliant attire; and eliminates social pressures to wear brand name clothing or “gang colors” thereby easing financial pressure on parents and enhancing school safety.

A standard student attire policy prohibits certain types and styles of clothing while requiring solid colored clothing and fabrics for pants, skirts, shorts, or similar clothing and short or long sleeved shirts with collars. A standard school attire policy may authorize a small logo but may not authorize a slogan or motto and must allow a student’s parent to opt out of the policy for religious purposes or by reason of a disability. A school district that adopts a standard student attire policy that complies with the bill is immune from civil liability as a result of adopting such policy. The bill creates the safe schools allocation and criteria for distribution of funds. The actual amount and allowable activities will be provided in the General Appropriations Act. Additional funds are provided to school districts with a standard student attire policy that complies with the bill.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1: Creates the “Students Attired for Education (SAFE) Act.”

Section 2: Amends s. 1001.43(1), F.S., authorizing school boards to adopt policies regarding standard student attire without requiring specific findings, enumerating the benefits of such policies, describing the requirements for such policies, and providing immunity from civil liability for school districts that enact a district-wide policy for all students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

Section 3: Amends s. 1011.62, F.S., creating the safe schools allocation, requiring school districts to comply with reporting requirements and authorizing additional funds for each school district that adopts a district-wide standard student attire policy for kindergarten through eighth grade.

Section 4: Provides an appropriation of \$10,000,000 for the 2015-2016 school year.

Section 5: Provides an effective date of upon becoming law.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

Indeterminate.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

The fiscal associated with the Safe Schools allocation for districts that implement a districtwide K-8 standard student attire policy is \$10,000,000. There are an estimated 1.9 million K-8 full-time equivalent students (FTE) (DJJ and Virtual FTE have been excluded) who would be impacted by the policy in FY 2015-16. Currently there are seven districts that have a district-wide K-8 policy which equates to 156,554 FTE. Funding is calculated as up to \$10 per student in kindergarten through eighth grade.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

None.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/ COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES

Not applicable.