

2024 Florida Legislative Session Preview:

More career and technical education (CTE) expansion, computer science education, financial aid, and additional legislation impacting Florida’s students



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*as of 1/3/2024

Introduction

Florida’s 2024 Legislative Session is scheduled to start on Tuesday, January 9th. After this session, current Senate and House leadership will step down from their roles, but not before looking to accomplish a few more of their priorities. This includes Senate President Passidomo’s Live Healthy Act, discussed below, aimed at improving Florida’s health care programs and workforce.

With more than 1,200 bills filed between both chambers, there are several policy initiatives poised to impact postsecondary access, success and attainment for Florida students. The committee weeks leading up to this year’s legislative session highlighted both chambers’ interest in apprenticeships, adult education, CTE articulation pathways, CTE expansion, K-12 student truancy, and financial aid. Many of the proposals before the legislature over the scheduled 60-day session will impact the state’s path to achieving a [Talent Strong Florida](#).

Within the framework of FCAN’s Seven Conditions for Success, this preview describes the budget and policy priorities from Governor DeSantis and the Legislature to watch this session.



Budget

Governor Ron DeSantis has recommended a \$114.4 billion budget for FY 2024-2025, an increase of more than \$4.6 billion compared to the current 23-24 FY budget. The [Focus on Florida's Future](#) budget outlines the Governor's priorities for the coming year, including historically large per pupil K-12 expenditures, \$1.1 billion in tax cuts, and \$1.3 billion in disaster recovery funding.

The Governor continues to support the goal for Florida to become number one in the nation for workforce education by 2030, outlined in [Executive Order 19-31](#), by proposing funding to programs that promote credential completion, student retention, and CTE. The numbers in the parentheses will show if program funding has increased or decreased compared to the current year's fiscal budget. Highlights include:

- \$1.7 billion in state operating funds for the Florida College System (FCS) and \$3.7 billion for the State University System (SUS). (+\$110M for FCS, +\$20M for SUS)
- \$20 million for the **Pathways to Career Opportunities Grant Program** with \$5 million to continue the new Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Program.
- \$35 million to continue the work of the **Open Door Grant Program**, expanding the affordability of workforce training for Florida students.
- \$28.5 million in **Performance-based Incentives for CTE students** attending school district career technical centers and Florida Colleges.
- **Performance funding** for the FCS and SUS is recommended at \$30 million and \$645 million, respectively.
- \$125 million in continued funding for two programs implemented in 2022 to enhance Florida's nursing workforce: (1) the Prepping Institutions, Programs, Employers and Learners through Incentive for Nursing Education (**PIPELINE**) program and Linking Industry to Nursing Education (**LINE**) program.
- Funding for **Bright Futures Scholarship Program** at \$603 million, fully funding anticipated student enrollment. (+\$12.4M)
- Funding for the **Florida Student Assistance Grant (FSAG)** at \$290 million. (+\$2M)
- Maintaining the tuition freeze at Florida's colleges and universities since 2014, allowing Florida to remain one of the states with the lowest tuition rates in the country.

SB 62/HB 767 – Resident Status for Tuition Purposes

Bill Sponsors: Senator Rosalind Osgood (D – Plantation) and Representative Jervonte Edmonds (D – West Palm Beach)

Senate Bill 62 and House Bill 767 are identical bills that would allow previously incarcerated individuals to establish Florida residency for educational purposes through documentation that was valid prior to their incarceration. They may do this even if this documentation expired during the duration of their incarceration. Similar bills were filed last year but did not receive committee hearings.

SB 460/HB 917 – Career and Technical Education

Bill Sponsors: Senator Corey Simon (R – Tallahassee) and Representative John Snyder (R – Stuart)

Senate Bill 460 and House Bill 917 are similar bills looking to continue expanding CTE for Florida students. These bills would expand high school career fairs to include an “industry recruitment day” to ensure that agricultural, construction, nursing, and other industries on the Career and Professional Education (CAPE) Funding List can meet with students and discuss high-wage, high-demand careers.

Both bills would allow 16- and 17-year-olds to work on construction sites if they have earned their Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) certification and are under direct supervision of someone who is at least 21 years old, also has their OSHA certification and has at least two years of related work experience.

There are also changes to current grade point average (GPA) calculations. Under these proposals, all grades in courses that relate to a CAPE Digital Tool Certificate or lead to a CAPE Industry Certification will be weighted the same as an honors course. Both proposals also task the curriculum review committee with reviewing the Applied Construction Mathematics course for inclusion in K-12 education.

The Department of Education (DOE) and Board of Governors (BOG) will annually publish the number of postsecondary credits available for students who complete a career/professional program at a CAPE academy or who complete a series of courses that will lead to an industry certification.

Lastly, the bills create the Career and Technical Education Task Force within the DOE to study current CTE offerings in every school district. The task force would also be

responsible for identifying how students and parents are learning about CTE courses, how many students earn an industry certification and subsequently gain employment in the same field and recommend changes or expansions to improve current CTE offerings.

SB 626 – Dual Enrollment Programs

Bill Sponsor: Senator Corey Simon (R – Tallahassee)

Senate Bill 626 clarifies that school boards must enter into dual enrollment articulation agreements with their local FCS institution if that institution is able to offer dual enrollment education, either online or in-person.

SB 7016 – Health Care

Bill Sponsors: Senate Health Policy Committee, Senator Colleen Burton (R – Lakeland)

Senate Bill 7016 is part of President Passidomo’s Live Healthy Initiative, created to address Florida’s healthcare workforce shortages. Key proposed actions within the bill include:

Dental Student Loan Repayment Program

The bill expands the current Dental Student Loan Repayment Program to include dental hygienists. Individuals must be employed in a public health program or private practice that serves Medicaid patients and other low-income populations in a medically underserved area and volunteer 25 hours of dental services a year in a free clinic. Upon satisfying these requirements, these individuals are eligible for an award of 20% of their principal loan amount.

Florida Reimbursement Assistance for Medical Education Program

The bill proposes to expand this program that encourages individuals to practice in underserved communities in Florida by offsetting costs incurred for medical or nursing degrees. SB 7016 would allow additional eligible individuals for these awards, including advanced practice registered nurses (up to \$75,000), physician assistants and mental health professionals (up to \$75,000), registered nurses, and licensed practical nurses (up to \$45,000).

Training, Education, and Clinicals in Health (TEACH) Funding Program

The TEACH Program is a new initiative proposed to grow Florida’s healthcare workforce while also increasing services to low-income and underserved communities. The program would allow facilities, such as rural health clinics, to be reimbursed for each

student they teach, supervise, and evaluate during a clinical rotation. Targeted individuals include advanced practice registered nursing students seeking a primary care specialty, dental and physician assistant students, and behavioral health students.

Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) Program Expansion

The bill seeks to expand the current LINE program, first created in 2022, to provide funding to eligible high-performing independent colleges and universities. Programs must have a 70% completion rate for certified nursing assistant programs and a 75% industry certification exam pass rate for licensed practical nursing and registered nursing program students.

HB 483 – Education

Bill Sponsor: Representative Karen Gonzalez-Pittman (R – Tampa)

House Bill 483 expands CTE in K-12 and postsecondary, addressing digital skills access and emerging technology issues. Like Senate Bill 460 and House Bill 917, the bill would require CAPE courses to be weighed the same as an honors course. The bill also would expand current eligibility requirements for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program to include apprenticeships. House Bill 459 (2023) sought a similar expansion of Bright Futures eligibility but did not pass.

Computer Science Courses

The bill requires access to computer science instruction in public schools, including Florida Virtual School, from elementary through high school. High school students must have the ability to take computer science courses that lead to a related industry certification. Such courses may also count for a student’s foreign language requirement, and Florida’s public postsecondary institutions must recognize these credits.

Public elementary and middle schools may establish digital classrooms to help students improve their digital literacy skills and earn grade-appropriate industry certifications where available. To incentivize instructional personnel to teach computer science courses, the bill would allow a \$1,000 bonus to educators certified in computer science, or if they passed the subject area exam.

The Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Education Task Force

This bill creates The Artificial Intelligence in Education Task Force to identify the appropriate use of AI in K-12 and higher education. The task force must also identify current workforce needs for the AI industry and provide policy recommendations to the legislature to align education and training programs for this field by December 1, 2025.

HB 553 – Career-themed Courses

Bill Sponsor: Representative Lisa Dunkley (D – Lauderhill)

House Bill 553 makes a few changes to update offerings for career-themed courses in K-12. The bill would update the current responsibilities for school districts when creating their CAPE Act strategic plans. Under the bill, when students select middle school classes, the district must inform them and their parents or guardians of CAPE and career-themed courses available.

HB 1067 – Postsecondary Students who are Homeless or At Risk of Homelessness

Bill Sponsor: Representative Marie Paule Woodson (D – Pembroke Pines)

House Bill 1067 would modify the responsibilities of college and university foster care liaisons. Under this bill, the liaisons must provide students with on-campus support in applying for eligible tuition waivers, financial aid, and tailored academic advising.

The bill also states that the DOE and BOG must work with the State Office on Homelessness (located within the Department of Children and Families (DCF)), to develop best practices in working with postsecondary students who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness, including prioritized housing and payment plans that coincide with financial aid disbursement schedules.

The bill would create the Fostering Independence Grant Program under the DOE to ensure that foster youth and students experiencing homelessness receive a grant to cover costs associated with postsecondary education.

Other relevant bills:

In addition to the above legislation, members have filed several bills that address various financial aid and scholarship programs. The following section includes relevant funding bills.

Financial Aid, Scholarships, and other related bills

- **Senate Bill 262 and House Bill 25** expand eligibility requirements for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Academic Scholars award to students recognized by any of the College Board National Recognition programs.

- **Senate Bill 470 and House Bill 465** would revoke scholarship, financial aid, and fee waiver eligibility for public postsecondary students who promote foreign terrorist organizations, as identified by the United States Department of State.
- **Senate Bill 926 and House Bill 249** create the Ocoee Scholarship Program for current African American residents of Ocoee and descendants of the Ocoee Election Day Riots. The maximum annual funding for this award is \$6,100, administered by DOE, and may be used at career centers, FCS and SUS institutions. The House version also includes Florida's three private HBCUs.

Additional Bills

Senate Bill 494 and House Bill 511 would require FCS and SUS institutions to waive graduate testing requirements (ex. GRE) for service members applying to a master's or doctoral program. **Senate Bill 522 and House Bill 501** rename Tallahassee Community College to Tallahassee State College. **Senate Bill 622** would eliminate current requirements for basic skills in career education programs. Under this bill, postsecondary students would not need to pass a standardized test of basic skills to receive their certificate of completion.

Senate Bill 634 would expand the list of qualifying documents to establish residency for tuition to include an application for property tax exemptions. **Senate Bill 7004** proposes a variety of changes, including changing current parameters for K-12 student retention and eliminates the Algebra 1 EOC and 10th-grade English Language Arts assessment requirements for a standard high school diploma.

House Bill 49 would allow 16- and 17-year-olds to work the same number of hours as an 18-year-old. FCAN released a statement on this proposal and it is available [here](#).



Florida College Access Network (FCAN) is Florida’s collaborative network committed to ensuring all Floridians have the opportunity to achieve an education beyond high school and a rewarding career. We envision a Florida working together where education is the pathway to economic mobility for all. As a nonpartisan organization, FCAN strives to expand knowledge of research, data, policies, and practices that impact postsecondary access and attainment in Florida.

This report is intended as an educational resource and does not constitute an endorsement or opposition to any specific bill or legislation.

For more research and data from FCAN, visit www.floridacollegeaccess.org/research-and-data/.

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