

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Appropriations

BILL: CS/SB 7032

INTRODUCER: Appropriations Committee and Education Postsecondary Committee

SUBJECT: Education

DATE: February 26, 2024

REVISED: _____

ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
<u>Brick/Palazes</u>	<u>Bouck</u>		HE Submitted as Comm. Bill/Fav
1. <u>Gray</u>	<u>Sadberry</u>	<u>AP</u>	Fav/CS

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 7032 creates the Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program, GATE Scholarship Program, GATE Startup Grant Program, and GATE Program Performance Fund. All four programs are aimed at re-engaging students who have withdrawn from high school by providing opportunities to earn valuable career education credentials while also completing a standard high school diploma or equivalent credential.

The bill provides eligibility criteria for students to enroll in the GATE Program and defines the career education programs and certificates that can be offered to students enrolled in the GATE Program. The bill exempts students that are enrolled in the GATE program from the payment of tuition and specified fees and the costs of instructional materials. To assist Florida College System institutions, school districts, and charter technical career centers in administering the GATE Program, the GATE Scholarship and GATE Startup Grant Programs provide funds for implementing the program and reimbursing participating institutions for the tuition and fees and instructional materials for students enrolled in the GATE program.

Additionally, the bill provides program performance funding for institutions through the GATE Program Performance Fund. The performance funding is provided based on the number of students enrolled in the GATE program who earn a standard high school diploma or equivalent credential and a career certification that has been identified as having local, regional, or statewide values.

The bill requires the Department of Education (DOE) to disseminate information about the GATE Program and administer the GATE Startup Grant Program.

The funding provided for in this bill is subject to legislative appropriation. See Section V., Fiscal Impact Statement.

The bill is effective July 1, 2024.

II. Present Situation:

School Attendance

A student who attains the age of 16 years during the school year is not subject to compulsory school attendance beyond the date upon which he or she attains that age if the student files a formal declaration of intent to terminate school enrollment with the district school board. Public school students who have attained the age of 16 years and who have not graduated are subject to compulsory school attendance until the formal declaration of intent is filed with the district school board. The declaration must acknowledge that terminating school enrollment is likely to reduce the student's earning potential and must be signed by the student and the student's parent. The school district is required to notify the student's parent of receipt of the student's declaration of intent to terminate school enrollment. The student's certified school counselor or other school personnel is required to conduct an exit interview with the student to determine the reasons for the student's decision to terminate school enrollment and actions that could be taken to keep the student in school. The student's certified school counselor or other school personnel must inform the student of opportunities to continue his or her education in a different environment, including, but not limited to, adult education and high school equivalency examination preparation. Additionally, the student is required to complete a survey in order to provide data on student reasons for terminating enrollment and actions taken by schools to keep students enrolled.¹

School boards are required to provide opportunities for students at risk of withdrawing to enroll in career-themed courses or participate in career and professional academies.²

High School Graduation in Florida

Florida's High School Graduation Requirements

To earn a standard high school diploma a student must complete 24 credits, an International Baccalaureate curriculum, or an Advanced International Certificate of Education curriculum.³

All students must pass the statewide, standardized grade 10 ELA assessment, or earn a concordant score, and must pass the statewide, standardized Algebra I end-of-course (EOC) assessment, or earn a comparative score, in order to earn a standard high school diploma.⁴ A student enrolled in an Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or Advanced

¹ Section 1003.21(1), F.S.

² Section 1003.491(1), F.S.

³ Section 1003.4282, F.S.

⁴ Section 1003.4282(3), F.S. Section 1008.22(3)(b)6., F.S.

International Certificate of Education (AICE) course who takes the respective AP, IB, or AICE assessment and earns a specified score is not required to take the corresponding EOC assessment.⁵

Students who earn the required credits to graduate, but fail to pass the required assessments or achieve a 2.0 grade point average (GPA) are awarded a certificate of completion in a form prescribed by the State Board of Education (SBE). In the 2021-2022 graduation cohort, 5,818 students earned a certificate of completion.⁶

High School Equivalency Diploma Program

The high school equivalency diploma offers students who are no longer enrolled in high school an opportunity to earn a high school diploma by successfully passing the standard GED tests. To be eligible for the high school equivalency diploma program students must meet the following criteria:

- At least 16 years old and currently enrolled in a prekindergarten-12 program.
- Enrolled in and attending high school courses that meet high school graduation requirements.
- In jeopardy of not graduating with their kindergarten cohort because they are overage for grade, behind in credits, or have a low GPA.
- Assessed at a seventh grade reading level or higher at the time of selection as documented by the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) reading component or other assessment to determine grade level proficiency.⁷

Each school district is required to offer and administer the high school equivalency diploma examinations and the subject area examination to candidates. A candidate for a high school equivalency diploma must be at least 18 years of age on the date of the examination, except that in extraordinary circumstances, as provided for in rules of the district school board of the district in which the candidate resides or attends school, a candidate may take the examination after reaching the age of 16. School districts may not require a student who has reached the age of 16 to take any course before taking the examination unless the student fails to achieve a passing score on the GED practice test.⁸

In 2022-2023, there were 8,888 students enrolled in a school district GED program, of whom 5,330 were 21 years of age or less. During that same time, there were 1,166 students enrolled in a Florida College System (FCS) institution GED program, of whom 552 were 21 years of age or less.⁹

Florida's High School Graduation Rate

SBE rule provides that the 4-year graduation rate used in the school grades model be based on the “uniform or federal graduation rate” or the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate outlined

⁵ Section 1008.22(3), F.S.

⁶ Florida Department of Education, *Florida's High School Cohort 2021-22 Graduation Rate*, <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7584/urlt/GradRates2122.pdf>, (last visited Feb. 16, 2023).

⁷ Rule 6A-6.0212, F.A.C.

⁸ Section 1003.435, F.S.

⁹ Email, Florida Department of Education, Governmental Relations (Dec. 8, 2023) (On file with the Senate Appropriations Committee on Education).

in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).¹⁰ The ESEA defines the cohort for graduation in four years is the number of students in the adjusted cohort for the graduating class that formed based on first time ninth graders that entered in the fall four years prior.¹¹ The following adjustments are made to the graduation cohort over time to:

- Add incoming transfer students based on their grade level and year of entry;
- Remove deceased students; and
- Remove students who withdrew to attend school in another state, private school, or a home-education program.¹²

Each student in the graduation cohort receives a final classification as a graduate, dropout, or non-graduate. Students who earned a GED-based diploma are counted as non-graduates in the high school graduation rate, because the GED-based diploma is not recognized as a standard diploma.¹³ In the 2021-2022 graduation cohort, 392 students earned a GED-based diploma and 4,837 were enrolled in an Adult Education program.¹⁴

Schools that graduate less than one-third of their students are automatically identified for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) and may be required to immediately implement a district-managed turnaround plan approved by the Department of Education, and if the graduation rate fails to improve over time, close the school.¹⁵

Rural Areas of Opportunity

Rural areas of opportunity (RAO) is an area designated by the Governor, which has been adversely affected by an extraordinary economic event, severe or chronic distress, or a natural disaster. A rural community means:

- A county with a population of 75,000 or fewer.
- A county with 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 that continue to face extraordinary challenges to improve their economies, specifically in the terms of personal income, job creation, average wages and strong tax bases. A county that has low per capita income, low per capita taxable values, high unemployment, high underemployment, low earned wages, low housing values, high percentage of individuals receiving public assistance and high levels of poverty compared to the state average.
- 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

¹⁰ State Board of Education rule 6A-1.09981, F.A.C.

¹¹ Section 8101(25) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

¹² Florida Department of Education, *2021-22 Information Guide for the 4-year Graduation Rate Cohort*, <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7584/urlt/2122GradRateInfoGuide.pdf>, (last visited Jan. 19, 2023).

¹³ Section 8101(43) of ESEA defines a “regular high school diploma” and specifies that it may not be aligned to a State’s alternate academic achievement standards and does not include a general equivalency diploma, certificate of completion, certificate of attendance, or any other similar or lesser credential.

¹⁴ Florida Department of Education, *Florida’s High School Cohort 2021-22 Graduation Rate*, <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7584/urlt/GradRates2122.pdf> (last visited Jan. 19, 2023).

¹⁵ See 20 U.S.C. s. (c)(4)(D)(i) and s. 1008.33(4), F.S.

resource-based industries, located in an county not defined as rural, which has at least three or more economic distress factors.¹⁶

Florida's designated RAOs are:

- **Northwest Rural Area of Opportunity:** Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Wakulla, and Washington Counties, and the area within the city limits of Freeport and Walton County north of the Choctawhatchee Bay and intercoastal waterway.
- **South Central Rural Area of Opportunity:** DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, and Okeechobee counties, and the cities of Pahokee, Bell Glade, and South Bay (Palm Beach County), and Immokalee (Collier County).
- **North Central Rural Area of Opportunity:** Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrest, Hamilton, Jefferson, Levy, Madison, Putnam, Suwannee, Taylor and Union Counties.¹⁷

Florida Workforce Education

At the postsecondary level, the terms “workforce education” and “workforce education program” include:

- Adult general education programs designed to improve the employability skills of the state's workforce.
- Career certificate programs, which are defined as a course of study that leads to one completion point.
- Applied technology diploma programs.
- Continuing workforce education courses.
- Degree career education programs.
- Apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs.¹⁸

Adult Education programs in Florida were established to encourage the provision of educational services that will enable adults to acquire:

- The basic skills necessary to attain basic and functional literacy.
- A high school diploma or successfully complete the high school equivalency examination.
- An educational foundation that will enable them to become more employable, productive, and self-sufficient citizens.
- Knowledge and skills they need to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.¹⁹

“Adult secondary education” is a course through which a person receives high school credit that leads to the award of a high school diploma or a course of instruction through which a student prepares to take the high school equivalency examination.²⁰

¹⁶ Section 288.0656(2), F.S.

¹⁷ Florida Commerce, *Rural Areas of Opportunity*, <https://www.floridajobs.org/community-planning-and-development/rural-community-programs/rural-areas-of-opportunity> (last visited Feb. 22, 2024).

¹⁸ Section 1011.80(1), F.S.

¹⁹ Florida Department of Education, *Adult Education*, <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/adult-edu/>, (last visited Jan. 10, 2024).

²⁰ Section 1004.02(4), F.S.

An “applied technology diploma program” (ATD) is a course of study that is part of a technical degree program consisting of either technical or college credit and leads to employment in a specific occupation.²¹ A public school district may offer an ATD program only as technical credit, with college credit awarded to a student upon articulation to an FCS institution. Statewide articulation among public schools and FCS institutions is guaranteed.²²

To qualify for admission to an ATD program, a student must:²³

- Have a high school diploma, a high school equivalency diploma, or a certificate of completion; or
- Submit a signed affidavit by the student's parent or legal guardian attesting that the student has completed a home education program that satisfies school attendance requirements.²⁴

A “career certificate program” is a course of study that leads to at least one occupational completion point. An “occupational completion point” means the occupational competencies that qualify a person to enter an occupation that is linked to a career and technical program. The career certificate program may also confer credit that may articulate with a diploma or career degree education program.²⁵ The DOE has established 29 statewide articulation agreements for career certificate programs to career degree education programs.²⁶

One-Stop Delivery System

The one-stop delivery system is the state’s primary customer service strategy for offering every Floridian access, through service sites or telephone or computer networks, to the following services:

- Job search, referral, and placement assistance.
- Career counseling and educational planning.
- Consumer reports on service providers.
- Recruitment and eligibility determination.
- Support services, including child care and transportation assistance to gain employment.
- Employability skills training.
- Adult education and basic skills training.
- Technical training leading to a certification and degree.
- Claim filing for reemployment assistance services.
- Temporary income, health, nutritional, and housing assistance.
- Other appropriate and available workforce development services.²⁷

²¹ Section 1004.02(7), F.S.

²² Section 1007.23(5), F.S.

²³ Rule 6A-10.024(7), F.A.C.

²⁴ Section 1002.41, F.S.

²⁵ Section 1004.02, F.S.

²⁶ Florida Department of Education, *Statewide Articulation Agreements: Statewide Career Pathways*, <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/career-technical-edu-agreements/psav-to-aas-as-degree.stml> (last visited Feb. 16, 2024).

²⁷ Section 445.009(1), F.S.

Open Door Grant

The Open Door Grant program is to incentivize current and future workers to enroll in career and technical education that leads to a credential, certificate, or degree. In order to meet eligibility, a student must:

- Meet the general requirements for student eligibility for state financial aid awards and tuition assistance grants.
- Be enrolled in an integrated education and training program, where the institution establishes partnerships with local workforce development boards to provide basic skills instruction with workforce training that results in a credential under CareerSource Florida or a workforce education program that is included on the Master Credentials List.
- Be enrolled at a school district postsecondary technical career center, a FCS institution, or a charter technical career center.²⁸

A student is eligible to receive a maximum award to cover 100 percent of tuition and fees, exam or assessment costs, books and other related materials. The open door grant is awarded after all other federal and state financial aid is applied. In addition to receiving an award to cover all tuition, fees, costs and related materials, a student may receive a stipend of up to \$1,500, or an amount specified in the General Appropriations Act, per academic year to cover education expenses related to the cost of attendance.²⁹

CAPE Industry Certification Funding List

The State Board of Education is required to adopt, at least annually, based on recommendations by the Commissioner of Education, the CAPE Industry Certification Funding List that assigns additional full-time equivalent membership to certifications identified in the Master Credentials List that meet a statewide, regional, or local demand.³⁰

Certifications included on the CAPE Industry Certification Funding List:

- Require at least 150 hours of instruction and
- Can be earned in middle and high school.
- Usually require passage of a subject area examination and some combination of work experience, educational attainment, or on-the-job training.³¹

Funds for Operation of Workforce Education Programs

State funding for workforce education programs is calculated based on weighted student enrollment and program costs, minus tuition and fee revenues, and including various supplemental cost factors.³²

Annual performance funding distributions to district school boards and state colleges are based on student attainment of the credentials included in the CAPE Industry Certification Funding

²⁸ Section 1009.895, F.S.

²⁹ Section 1009.895(3), F.S.

³⁰ Section 1008.44(1), F.S.

³¹ Rule 6A-6.0576(5)-(6), F.S.

³² Section 1011.80(6)(b), F.S.

List.³³ Performance funding for industry certifications for school district workforce education programs is contingent upon specific appropriation in the General Appropriations Act.³⁴

Each district school board or FCS institution is provided \$1,000 for each industry certification earned by a workforce education student, or prorated if funds are insufficient to fully fund the calculated total award.³⁵

Workforce Education Tuition and Fees

For programs leading to a career certificate or an ATD, the standard tuition is \$2.33 per contact hour for residents. A block tuition of \$45 per half year or \$30 per term is assessed for students enrolled in adult general education, which includes adult secondary education programs. Each district school board and FCS institution may adopt tuition that is within the range of five percent below to five percent above the standard tuition. Institutions may also adopt student financial aid, capital improvement, and technology fees for students that are not enrolled in adult general education programs. The student financial aid fee is capped at ten percent of tuition, while the capital improvement and technology fees are capped at five percent of tuition.³⁶

FCS institution boards of trustees and district school boards are also authorized to establish fee schedules for the following user fees and fines: laboratory fees; parking fees and fines; library fees and fines; fees and fines relating to facilities and equipment use or damage; access or identification card fees; duplicating, photocopying, binding, or microfilming fees; standardized testing fees; diploma replacement fees; transcript fees; application fees; graduation fees; and late fees related to registration and payment. Such user fees and fines may not exceed the cost of the services provided and may only be charged to persons receiving the service.³⁷

Workforce Education Funding for Co-enrollment

School districts and FCS institutions are permitted to allow students currently enrolled in high school to co-enroll in their Adult High School program.³⁸ A student who is coenrolled in a K-12 education program and an adult education program may be reported for purposes of funding in an adult education program. If a student is coenrolled in core curricula courses for credit recovery or dropout prevention purposes and does not have a pattern of excessive absenteeism or habitual truancy or a history of disruptive behavior in school, the student may be reported for funding for up to two courses per year. Such a student is exempt from the payment of the block tuition for adult general education programs. The Department of Education is required to develop a list of courses to be designated as core curricula courses for the purposes of coenrollment.³⁹

³³ Section 1008.44(2), F.S.

³⁴ Section 1011.80(7), F.S.

³⁵ *Id.* and 1011.81(2)(b), F.S.

³⁶ Section 1009.22, F.S. and Florida Department of Education, *State Funding for Districts: 2023-24 District Workforce Education Tuition and Fees (Attachment)*, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7529/urlt/2023-24-Workforce-Education-Tuition-and-Fees-Attachment.pdf> at 1 (last visited Jan. 21, 2024).

³⁷ Section 1009.22(10), F.S.

³⁸ Florida Department of Education, *Memorandum: 2022-23 Adult High School Co-Enrollment Program Eligible Course List* (July 12, 2022), available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7671/urlt/2223-AdultHighCoEnroll-Memo.pdf>. (last visited Jan. 21, 2024).

³⁹ Section 1011.80(10), F.S.

State Financial Aid and Grants

The general requirements for eligibility of students for state financial aid awards and tuition assistance grants consist of the following:

- Achievement of the academic requirements of and acceptance at a state university or state college; a nursing diploma school approved by the Florida Board of Nursing; a Florida college or university which is accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the SBE; a Florida institution the credits of which are acceptable for transfer to state universities; a career center; or a private career institution accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the SBE.
- Residency in this state for no less than one year preceding the award of aid or a tuition assistance grant.⁴⁰ Residency in this state must be for purposes other than to obtain an education.
- Submission of certification attesting to the accuracy, completeness, and correctness of information provided to demonstrate a student's eligibility to receive state financial aid awards or tuition assistance grants.⁴¹

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

This bill creates the Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program, GATE Scholarship Program, the GATE Startup Grant Program and the GATE Program Performance Fund. All four programs are aimed at re-engaging students who have withdrawn from high school by providing opportunities to earn valuable career education credentials while also completing a standard high school diploma or equivalent credential.

The bill provides eligibility criteria for students to enroll in the GATE Program and defines the career education programs and certificates that can be offered to students enrolled in the GATE Program. The bill exempts students that are enrolled in the GATE program from the payment of tuition and specified fees and the costs of instructional materials.

To assist Florida College System (FCS) institutions, school districts, and charter technical career centers in administering the GATE Program, the GATE Scholarship and GATE Startup Grant Programs provide funds for implementing the programs and reimbursing participating institutions for the tuition and fees and instructional materials for students enrolled in the GATE program.

Additionally, the bill provides program performance funding for institutions through the GATE Program Performance Fund. The program funding is provided based on the number of students enrolled in the GATE program who earn a standard high school diploma or equivalent credential and a career certification that has been identified as having local, regional, or statewide value.

The bill requires the Department of Education (DOE) to disseminate information about the GATE Program and administer the GATE Startup Grant Program.

⁴⁰ The residency requirement is specific to awards under ss. 1009.50, 1009.505, 1009.51, 1009.52, 1009.53, 1009.60, 1009.62, 1009.72, 1009.73, 1009.75, 1009.77, 1009.89, and 1009.894, F.S.

⁴¹ Section 1009.40, F.S.

School Attendance

The bill modifies s. 1003.21, F.S., to add to the required notifications to 16 and 17 year old students who withdraw from high school information about the GATE Program.

One-Stop Delivery System

The bill modifies s. 445.009, F.S., to add to the services in the one-stop delivery system integrated education and training and the GATE Program.

Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program

The bill creates s. 1004.933, F.S., to establish the Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program within the Department of Education (DOE). In regards to the GATE Program, the bill specifies the intent of the Legislature:

- To create an alternative education pathway to education and workforce opportunities for students who have withdrawn from high school prior to graduation. To affirm the unequivocal value of a standard high school diploma as the primary education credential by which students access higher education and workforce opportunities.
- To expand opportunities for students to complete high school courses and earn a standard high school diploma.
- To recognize that when a student withdraws from high school prior to graduation, the student has not received the full value of taxpayer-funded pre-k-12 education, and therefore lacks the education credential essential to gainful employment and future educational opportunities.
- To provide an alternative pathway program, waiving tuition and fees for the program for participating students who have not earned a standard high school diploma.

The bill creates the Gate Program within the Department of Education (DOE) and sets forth the responsibilities and duties of the DOE. The bill requires the DOE to:

- Disseminate information about the GATE program to eligible institutions, local workforce development boards, and other local, regional, or state initiatives that interact with the GATE Program's target population.
- Connect prospective students directly to eligible institutions.
- Provide access to online career planning tools.
- Annually report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives on all aspects of the program.

To be eligible to participate in the GATE Program, the bill specifies that a student must:

- Not have earned a standard high school diploma or a high school equivalency diploma.
- Have been withdrawn from high school.
- Be a resident of this state for tuition purposes.
- Be 16 to 21 years of age at the time of initial enrollment, and if 16 or 17 years of age has withdrawn from school enrollment pursuant to the requirements and safeguards of s. 1003.21, F.S., which require for example, written parental permission and counseling to remain in school.
- Select the adult secondary education program and career education program of his or her choice at the time of admission to the GATE Program, provided that the career education

program is included on the Master Credentials List. The bill requires the student remain in the pathway after enrollment, except that, if necessary, the student may enroll in an adult basic education program prior to enrolling in the adult secondary education program.

- Maintain a 2.0 grade point average (GPA) for career and technical education coursework.
- Complete the adult secondary education program and the career education program within three years unless the institution determines that an extension is warranted due to extenuating circumstances.

The bill provides that students enrolled in the GATE Program are exempt from the payment of registration, tuition, laboratory, and examination fees to a participating institution. Additionally, instructional materials assigned for use under the GATE Program must be made available to GATE Program students free of charge. The bill prohibits an institution from:

- Imposing additional criteria to determine a student's eligibility to receive a fee waiver under the GATE Program.
- Requiring students to pay for instructional materials costs that are eligible for reimbursement under the GATE Scholarship Program.

Subject to availability of funds, a student who meets the requirements of and is enrolled in the GATE program is eligible to receive the stipend under the Open Door Grant program for related costs of attendance.

GATE Scholarship Program

The bill creates 1009.711, F.S., to implement the GATE Scholarship Program. The GATE Scholarship Program is created to financially support institutions in providing the GATE Program.

Under the bill, the GATE Scholarship Program will reimburse eligible institutions for registration, tuition, laboratory, and examination fees and related instructional materials costs for students enrolled in the GATE Program. The bill requires the GATE Scholarship Program to reimburse career centers and Florida College System institutions at their respective in-state resident tuition rates.

Each participating institution is required to report to the DOE all students enrolled in the GATE Program during the fall, spring, or summer terms within 30 days after the end of regular registration. For each eligible student, the institution is required to report the total reimbursable expenses by category, which the DOE must consider in determining an institution's GATE Scholarship Program award. The bill requires the DOE to reimburse each participating institution no later than 30 days after the institution has reported enrollment for that term.

The bill provides that reimbursements from the GATE Scholarship Program are contingent upon an annual appropriation in the General Appropriations Act (GAA). If the statewide reimbursement amount is greater than the appropriation, the institutional reimbursement amounts must be prorated among the institutions that have timely reported eligible students.

The bill authorizes the State Board of Education to adopt rules to implement the GATE Program and the GATE Scholarship Program.

GATE Startup Grant Program

The bill creates 1011.804, F.S., to establish the GATE Startup Grant Program within the DOE to fund and support the startup and implementation of the GATE Program. The bill requires the DOE to administer the grants, determine eligibility, and distribute grant awards. The bill specifies that the GATE Startup Grant Program is subject to legislative appropriation.

The bill authorizes the DOE to solicit proposals from career centers and Florida College System institutions without programs that meet the requirements of the GATE Program. Such institutions must be located in or serve a rural area of opportunity as designated by the Governor. The bill requires the DOE to prioritize grant proposals that combine basic education, adult secondary education, and career education programs at one location or allow students to complete programs through distance learning. An applicant may not receive more than ten percent of the total amount appropriated for the program.

The bill requires the DOE to make the application available no later than August 15, 2024, and for grant proposals to include:

- The institution or institutions that will provide the adult basic education, adult secondary education, and career education programs;
- The proposed adult basic and secondary education program the institution will provide and the projected enrollment for such program;
- The proposed career education program the institution will provide and the projected enrollment for such program;
- The credentials associated with the career education program;
- The cost of all instruction for all programs contemplated in the proposal, including costs for tuition, fees, registration, and laboratory, examination, and instructional material costs;
- Outreach strategies, including collaboration with local workforce development boards;
- A plan or timeline for implementing the GATE Program and enrolling students.

The bill specifies that grant funds may be used for planning activities and other related expenses such as expenses related to the program instruction, but may not be used for indirect costs. Grant recipients are required to submit an annual report to the department.

GATE Program Performance Fund

The bill creates s. 1011.8041, F.S., to establish the GATE Program Performance Fund to reward school districts and FCS institutions for the documented success of students participating in the GATE Program. Subject to legislative appropriation, each participating institution must receive \$1,000 per student who completes the GATE Program by completing the adult secondary education program and the career education program within three years. The bill specifies, if a student completes the adult secondary education program and the career education programs at different institutions, then each institution must receive \$500.

The bill provides that if funding is insufficient to fully fund the calculated total award, such funds must be prorated among the institutions.

Funds for the Operation of Workforce Education

The bill modifies s. 1011.80, F.S., to increase from two to four the number of courses that may be reported for funding for a student who is coenrolled in a K-12 education program and adult education program. The bill also removes the requirement that the courses funded must be core curricula.

High School Equivalency Diploma Program

The bill modifies s. 1003.435, F.S., to require district school boards to notify each candidate for the high school equivalency diploma of the adult secondary and postsecondary education options available in or near the district, including the GATE Program. Additionally, the candidate must be informed of the eligibility requirements and any minimum academic requirements for each available option.

The bill is effective July 1, 2024.

IV. Constitutional Issues:**A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The funding for the GATE Scholarship Program, the GATE Startup Grant Program and the GATE Program Performance is subject to legislative appropriation. SB 2500 provides \$14.7 million to implement the program, and to fund the startup grant, the scholarship and the performance program.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 445.009, 1003.21, 1003.435, and 1011.80.

This bill creates the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 1004.933, 1009.711, 1011.804, and 1011.8041.

IX. Additional Information:**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)**CS by Appropriations on February 22, 2024:**

The committee substitute:

- Modifies legislative intent to emphasize the unequivocal value of a standard high school diploma as the primary education credential by which students' access higher education and workforce opportunities.
- Clarifies that eligibility for the GATE Program requires that 16 and 17 year old students received parental permission and counseling to remain in high school prior to their withdrawal from high school and that other students are no longer enrolled in high school.
- Adds to the one-stop delivery system integrated education and training and the GATE Program.
- Specifies that students may also receive a stipend through the Open Door Grant Program for related costs of attendance in the GATE Program.
- Requires the Department of Education to disseminate information about the GATE Program.
- Establishes a Gate Startup Grant Program to fund and support the startup and implementation of new GATE programs in rural areas.
- Modifies the GATE Program Student Success Incentive Fund to the GATE Program Performance Fund. Requires that students that earn both a high school diploma or

equivalent and a career education credential of value for their institutions to qualify for performance-based funding, with a revised award amount of \$1,000.

- Removes from the bill a provision modifying the calculation of school grades.

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.
