

ENROLLED

CS/HB21, Engrossed 1

2024 Legislature

1
 2 An act relating to the Dozier School for Boys and
 3 Okeechobee School Victim Compensation Program;
 4 creating s. 16.63, F.S.; establishing the Dozier
 5 School for Boys and Okeechobee School Victim
 6 Compensation Program within the Department of Legal
 7 Affairs; specifying the purpose of the program;
 8 requiring the department to provide specified notice
 9 of the program; requiring the department to accept and
 10 process applications for the payment of compensation
 11 claims under the program; specifying application
 12 procedures and requirements; requiring the department
 13 to issue application approvals or denials under
 14 specified conditions; requiring notice of application
 15 approval or denial; requiring the department to pay a
 16 specified compensation amount to approved applicants;
 17 limiting the compensation an applicant may receive
 18 related to the claim; providing for rulemaking;
 19 authorizing the Commissioner of Education to award a
 20 standard high school diploma to specified persons;
 21 providing an appropriation; providing an effective
 22 date.

23
 24 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:
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26 Section 1. Section 16.63, Florida Statutes, is created to
 27 read:

28 16.63 Dozier School for Boys and Okeechobee School Victim
 29 Compensation Program.—

30 (1) The Dozier School for Boys and Okeechobee School
 31 Victim Compensation Program is established within the Department
 32 of Legal Affairs. The purpose of the program is to compensate
 33 living persons who were confined to the Dozier School for Boys
 34 or the Okeechobee School at any time between 1940 and 1975 and
 35 who were subjected to mental, physical, or sexual abuse
 36 perpetrated by school personnel while they were so confined.

37 (2) The Department of Legal Affairs shall accept, review,
 38 and approve or deny applications for the payment of compensation
 39 claims under this section. Notice of the availability of such
 40 compensation must be given and any relevant forms made available
 41 for download on a page of the department's official website
 42 accessible through a direct link on the website's homepage,
 43 which link and page must be titled "The Dozier School for Boys
 44 and Okeechobee School Victim Compensation Program."

45 (3) An application for compensation under this section
 46 must be made by a living person who was confined to the Dozier
 47 School for Boys or the Okeechobee School between 1940 and 1975;
 48 the personal representative or estate of a decedent may not file
 49 an application for or receive compensation under this section.
 50 Such application must be made on a form approved by the

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51 department and include:

52 (a) The applicant's name, date of birth, mailing address,
 53 phone number, and, if available, electronic mail address.

54 (b) The name of the school in which the applicant was
 55 confined and the approximate dates of the applicant's
 56 confinement.

57 (c) Reasonable proof submitted as attachments establishing
 58 that the applicant was both:

59 1. Confined to the Dozier School for Boys or the
 60 Okeechobee School between 1940 and 1975, which proof may include
 61 school records submitted with a notarized certificate of
 62 authenticity signed by the records custodian or certified court
 63 records.

64 2. A victim of mental, physical, or sexual abuse
 65 perpetrated by school personnel during the applicant's
 66 confinement, which proof may include a notarized statement
 67 signed by the applicant attesting to the abuse the applicant
 68 suffered.

69 (d) A signed statement from the applicant acknowledging
 70 that, by accepting compensation under this section, the
 71 applicant waives any right to further compensation related to
 72 the applicant's confinement at the Dozier School for Boys or the
 73 Okeechobee School or any abuse suffered during such confinement.

74
 75 An application for compensation under this section must be

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76 | signed by the applicant under oath. A false statement in such
 77 | application, including in any attachment or exhibit submitted
 78 | therewith, is subject to the penalty of perjury under s.
 79 | 837.012.

80 | (4) Applications for compensation under this section must
 81 | be submitted no later than December 31, 2024.

82 | (5) Upon completed review of an application submitted
 83 | under this section, the department shall either:

84 | (a) Subject to appropriation, approve a one-time payment
 85 | to an applicant whose application meets the criteria specified
 86 | in this section. Each approved applicant shall receive an equal
 87 | share of the funds appropriated for this purpose.

88 | (b) Deny the payment of compensation under this section to
 89 | an applicant whose application does not meet the criteria
 90 | specified in this section.

91 |
 92 | Written notice of such approval or denial must be sent by
 93 | certified mail, return receipt requested, to the mailing address
 94 | provided by the applicant on the application form. An applicant
 95 | whose application is rejected for providing insufficient
 96 | information may submit a new application as provided in
 97 | subsection (4).

98 | (6) A person compensated under this section is ineligible
 99 | for any further compensation related to the person's confinement
 100 | at the Dozier School for Boys or the Okeechobee School or any

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101 | abuse suffered during such confinement.

102 | (7) The department shall adopt by rule procedures and
 103 | forms necessary to administer this section.

104 | Section 2. Pursuant to rules adopted by the State Board of
 105 | Education, the Commissioner of Education may award a standard
 106 | high school diploma to a person compensated pursuant to s.
 107 | 16.63, Florida Statutes, who has not completed high school
 108 | graduation requirements.

109 | Section 3. For the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the sum of \$20
 110 | million in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is
 111 | appropriated to the Department of Legal Affairs for the Dozier
 112 | School for Boys and Okeechobee School Victim Compensation
 113 | Program.

114 | Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2024.