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LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate . House

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The Committee on Appropriations (Gaetz) recommended the following:

Senate Amendment (with title amendment)

Delete lines 4198 - 4234
and insert:

Section 18. (1) The Legislature finds that the educational scholarship programs created pursuant to chapter 1002, Florida Statutes, provide unprecedented school choice in this state and are central to parent empowerment.

(a) The Legislature further finds that to protect universal school choice within this state, it is critical to remain good

stewards of taxpayer funds, including eligible contributions made to scholarship programs. This state is implementing the nation's largest school choice program, and it must be safeguarded.

(b) To improve the efficiency, accountability, and transparency of the scholarship programs, a single entity that can be held directly accountable to the state must be responsible for the implementation of the programs.

(c) Therefore, the Legislature determines that it is in the best interest of this state for the Department of Education to implement the scholarship programs.

(2) The Department of Education must provide a report outlining its recommendations for the implementation of the educational scholarship programs, with such implementation set to begin in the 2028-2029 school year.

(3) The department's recommendations must address each of the following program components:

(a) The application process.

(b) The enrollment and verification process.

(c) Student account management and requirements.

(d) The payment or reimbursement process.

(e) Communication with parents regarding the different scholarship programs and how to apply to a scholarship program.

(f) Assistance for parents with scholarship-related questions and issues.

(g) Administration of the contributions received pursuant to s. 1002.395(5), Florida Statutes.

(4) The department may, for any or all of the program components, recommend itself or any other state agency or public

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entity, such as school districts or educational consortiums, for implementation of the component. Any contract to implement a component must be awarded pursuant to chapter 287, Florida Statutes, through a competitive procurement process. At a minimum, the department must include an outline of the requirements for each program component which includes all of the following information, as applicable:

(a) An estimate of recurring and nonrecurring costs, including an estimate of any administrative costs the department deems reasonable and necessary, and for what purposes the administrative funds may be used.

(b) A description, justification, and detailed cost breakdown of any additional resources that the department requires to fully implement the program component.

(c) The business, functional, and technical requirements for the program component.

(d) A list of roles and responsibilities for the program component which delineates the functionality that will be provided by the department or other entity, as applicable.

(e) A proposed implementation timeline that identifies major milestones, dependencies, and the estimated completion dates for the program component.

(f) A framework establishing a communication structure and accountability measures which will ensure coordinated, efficient, and transparent interaction among each project component.

(g) An outcome-based contracting framework that will be used to measure each contract’s success against specific, objective performance metrics and desired outcomes. This

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framework may incorporate a system of rewards for exceeding performance goals, and penalties for failing to meet them.

(5) If the department recommends administration of any project component by a scholarship-funding organization, the department must include recommendations for eligibility requirements of the scholarship-funding organizations and any other changes to the application process or other procedural requirements it recommends.

(6) The department shall also include in its report a plan to ensure that the results from required background screening for education providers who are licensed or who are exempt from licensure through the Department of Children and Families are shared with the Department of Education.

(7) The department must submit the report to the Governor, the President of the Seante, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives no later than December 1, 2026, and must include any statutory changes that may be necessary to implement the department's recommendations.

(8) This section expires July 1, 2027.

================ T I T L E A M E N D M E N T ================

And the title is amended as follows:

Delete lines 232 - 236

and insert:

cross-references; providing legislative findings; requiring the Department of Education to provide a specified report regarding recommendations for implementing the educational scholarship programs; providing requirements for the recommendations;

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authorizing the department to make recommendations to specified entities; requiring certain contracts to be awarded through a competitive procurement process; requiring the department to include an outline of requirements for each program component; providing requirements for the outline; requiring the department to include recommendations for eligibility requirements of scholarship-funding organizations under specified circumstances; requiring the department to include a specified plan in its report; requiring the department to provide, by a specified date, the report to the Governor and the Legislature; providing for expiration;