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LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate . House

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Senator Brodeur moved the following:

Senate Amendment (with title amendment)

Delete everything after the enacting clause and insert:

Section 1. Section 265.0042, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

265.0042 Florida Speech and Debate Hall of Fame.—

(1) There is created the Florida Speech and Debate Hall of Fame. The Department of Management Services shall set aside an area on the Plaza Level of the Capitol Building and shall consult with the Florida Education Foundation and the

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Commissioner of Education regarding the design and theme of the area.

(2) The hall of fame shall do all of the following:

(a) Honor distinguished students, coaches, educators, alumni, veterans, public servants, benefactors, and supporters who have elevated speech and debate in this state.

(b) Preserve the history, impact, and cultural significance of competitive debate.

(c) Inspire future generations of Florida students to pursue speech, debate, public leadership, and civic excellence.

(3) The hall of fame shall convene a committee to establish procedures to nominate and select individuals to be featured.

Section 2. Section 683.221, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

683.221 Florida Speech and Debate Week.—

(1) February 1 through February 7 shall be annually designated as "Florida Speech and Debate Week."

(2) Florida Speech and Debate Week shall be observed for all of the following purposes:

(a) To recognize the academic, civic, and leadership value of competitive speech and debate.

(b) To honor educators, coaches, judges, and school districts that support debate programming.

(c) To inspire students statewide to participate in debate as a pathway to civic engagement.

(d) To promote Florida's role as the national leader in scholastic speech and debate.

(3) Public and charter schools, state agencies, and other entities may observe Florida Speech and Debate Week.

Section 3. Section 1000.09, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

1000.09 Competitive speech and debate.—

(1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.—

(a) The Legislature finds that speech and debate significantly improve literacy, critical thinking, research ability, civic knowledge, and leadership for students of this state.

(b) The Legislature also finds that this state's civics and debate expansion has become a national model, increasing access to this instruction in all regions. Sustaining and improving this success requires a permanent statewide organization with specialized expertise, program capacity, and year-round operational support.

(c) The Legislature further finds that the Florida Debate Initiative has demonstrated statewide effectiveness and is uniquely positioned to ensure continuity, equitable access, quality programming, tournament infrastructure, and instructional rigor.

(d) It is the intent of the Legislature to establish a comprehensive statewide infrastructure, under the Florida Debate Initiative's direction, which expands, supports, and elevates K-20 speech and debate education.

(2) CREATION, DESIGNATION, AND RESPONSIBILITIES.—In alignment with, and in support of, the Department of Education and the program it operates called the Florida Civics and Debate Initiative (FCDI), the Florida Debate Initiative, Inc., (FDI) is established as this state's nonprofit statewide speech and debate organization that manages, develops, and expands K-20

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civics, speech, and debate programs.

(a)1. FDI shall support and expand access to statewide civic literacy and speech and debate programs by undertaking the following, which list is not exhaustive:

a. Educating and training coaches and students.

b. Training judges and volunteers.

c. Promoting educational competition opportunities.

d. Leading training and leadership development experiences.

e. Establishing competition standards.

f. Maintaining statewide data reporting.

g. Assisting the FCDI, upon request, in civics-focused education, training, and programming initiatives.

2. This paragraph may not be construed to prohibit schools, districts, or students from participating in civics, speech and debate activities, leagues, or competitions not operated or supervised by FDI.

(b) FDI may establish and maintain partnerships with school districts, charter schools, state agencies, postsecondary institutions, nonprofit organizations, private entities, and national or international organizations to achieve the purposes of this section, including collaborative efforts with FCDI. In such collaboration:

1. FCDI and FDI shall jointly host and operate the annual National Civics and Debate Championship known as The Great Debate, a nationally recognized synthesis of civics education and debate competition that challenges students' civic knowledge, debate skills, and endurance through multi-day, multi-event competition.

2. FCDI shall lead specific civics immersion events,

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including FCDI Day at the Capitol and the Great American Civics Challenge, which includes the Ronald Reagan Presidential Debates and the We The People Civics Showdown.

3. FDI shall provide logistical support, debate tournament operations support, and tournament coordination support for The Great Debate and other collaborative initiatives to advance statewide speech and debate opportunities.

(3) AUTHORIZED USES OF FUNDS.—FDI may expend program funds on all of the following:

(a) Administrative operations, including staffing, insurance, compliance, reporting, and statewide infrastructure.

(b) Programmatic operations, including curriculum, training, summer programs, workshops, camps, and mentorship programs.

(c) Tournament operations, including logistics, staff, judge training, technology, awards, and regional team operations.

(d) Travel, lodging, training, and transportation for participants, including local, state, and national travel to competitions hosted by FDI, FCDI, or other civics, speech, and debate organizations.

(e) Public-private partnership development, including sponsorship and philanthropic support.

(f) Memberships, affiliations, and participation fees related to civics education, speech, debate, leadership, and academic competition programs, provided such memberships, affiliations, and participation advance the purposes of this section.

(4) REPORTING.—FDI shall make publicly available online and

submit, no later than December 31 of each year, an annual report to the Department of Education which includes all of the following:

(a) Student participation in statewide FDI programs, by district and demographics.

(b) The number of active student teams in statewide FDI speech and debate programs.

(c) Competitive and educational outcomes of statewide FDI programs.

(d) A categorized summary of all expenditures.

(5) ENDORSEMENT IN SPEECH AND DEBATE.—Pursuant to s. 1012.56 and State Board of Education rule, a certified teacher may earn an endorsement in speech and debate if he or she demonstrates all of the following:

(a) Completion of coursework approved by the board in argumentation, rhetoric, communication, or debate instruction.

(b) Completion of professional development offered by FDI or equivalent professional development offered by a Florida College System institution or state university.

(c) Competency, as determined by the board, in the rules, events, and competitive standards of scholastic debate.

(6) REGIONAL TRAVELING DEBATE TEAMS.—The department shall collaborate with FDI to establish regional traveling debate teams to represent Florida in national competitions. Teams must be accessible to students at Title I and rural schools. Teams must provide competitive training and coaching for speech and debate.

(a) All travel costs may be covered through legislative appropriation, public-private partnerships, and sponsorships.

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(b) A school district may use school buses to transport students to and from speech and debate competitions.

Section 4. Present subsection (29) of section 1001.42, Florida Statutes, is redesignated as subsection (30), and a new subsection (29) is added to that section, to read:

1001.42 Powers and duties of district school board.—The district school board, acting as a board, shall exercise all powers and perform all duties listed below:

(29) SPEECH AND DEBATE COMPETITION REPORTING.—Each district school board shall annually make available online and submit to the Department of Education, by a date set by the department, a report that includes all of the following information:

(a) The number of active speech and debate teams.

(b) Student participation rates.

(c) Competitive performance and public service engagement.

(d) Transportation, facilities, and administrative support provided.

(e) Resources needed to expand the program.

Section 5. Section 1004.0983, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

1004.0983 Speech and debate training pathways.—The Board of Governors and the State Board of Education shall develop undergraduate and graduate coursework, certificates, and micro-credentials in speech and debate education, coaching, and tournament operations.

(1) Coursework may include all of the following:

(a) Rhetoric, argumentation, and communication theory.

(b) Coaching methods and competitive event instruction.

(c) Tournament management and adjudication.

(d) Public speaking pedagogy.

(2) The Board of Governors and the State Board of Education may collaborate with the Florida Debate Initiative, Inc., to develop coursework.

Section 6. The Department of Education shall approve courses developed pursuant to s. 1004.0983, Florida Statutes, for inclusion in dual enrollment programs under s. 1007.271, Florida Statutes.

Section 7. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of $2.4 million in recurring funds is appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to support the Florida Debate Initiative, Inc.'s responsibilities assigned under s. 1000.09(1), Florida Statutes, including administrative, programmatic, and tournament operation duties.

Section 8. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.

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

And the title is amended as follows:

Delete everything before the enacting clause and insert:

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to speech and debate education; creating s. 265.0042, F.S.; creating the Florida Speech and Debate Hall of Fame; requiring the Department of Management Services to set aside an area in the Capitol Building for the hall of fame; requiring the department to consult with the Florida Education Foundation and the Commissioner of Education; providing the duties for the hall of fame;

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requiring the hall of fame to convene a committee for specified purposes; creating s. 683.221, F.S.; designating Florida Speech and Debate Week annually in February; providing purposes for the annual observance; authorizing specified entities to observe Florida Speech and Debate Week; creating s. 1000.09, F.S.; providing legislative findings and intent; establishing the Florida Debate Initiative, Inc., (FDI) as a statewide speech and debate organization that performs certain functions in support of the Florida Civics and Debate Initiative (FCDI) in the Department of Education; providing the duties of FDI; providing construction; authorizing FDI to establish and maintain certain partnerships; specifying activities for FDI and FCDI; providing authorized uses of funds for FDI; requiring FDI to publish online and submit annually by a specified date to the department a specified report; specifying requirements for the report; authorizing a certified teacher to earn an endorsement in speech and debate; specifying requirements for the endorsement; requiring the department to collaborate with FDI to establish regional traveling debate teams; authorizing a school district to use school buses to transport students to speech and debate competitions; amending s. 1001.42, F.S.; requiring each district school board annually to publish online and submit to the department a report; specifying requirements for the report; creating s. 1004.0983, F.S.; requiring the Board of Governors of

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the State University System and the State Board of Education to develop specified undergraduate and graduate coursework, certificates, and micro-credentials; authorizing the Board of Governors and the State Board of Education to collaborate with FDI to develop coursework; requiring the department to approve specified dual enrollment courses; providing an appropriation; providing an effective date.