

Top News: Budgets Ready for Conference - Affordable Housing at Risk



Florida House of Representatives prepare to debate the budget bill.

On Thursday, the House and Senate passed their respective 2018-2019 state budgets, setting the stage for joint conference committees comprised of Senators and Representatives to hammer out the differences between the two bills ([SB 2500](#) and [HB 5001](#)). With four weeks to go before session is scheduled to end on March 9 and with elections for most legislators on the horizon, it appears they will sine die on time. One of the biggest differences of concern to United Way is the \$198.5M "sweep" of Affordable Housing Trust Fund monies by the House into general revenue to be used for other purposes. The Senate, recognizing that Florida is facing an extraordinary housing crisis, does not sweep any of those funds and applies the entire \$322.1 million in the Trust Funds for their intended purposes. [Read more.](#)

Education: Restrictions on Use of Restraints for Students with Disabilities

Florida law provides conditions for the use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities; and requires documentation, reporting, and monitoring of the use of such techniques, but does not define these terms. Between 2010-11, when school districts began reporting incidents of restraint and seclusion, until July 2017, there have been 63,652 incidents of restraint and 19,354 incidents of seclusion reported. [CS/SB 260](#) (Book, D-Plantation) defines restraint and seclusion, revises the use of restraint techniques on certain students with disabilities, prohibits placing such students in seclusion, and specifies responsibilities for school districts, schools, and the Commissioner of Education. The bill limits the use of physical restraint to only when there is an imminent risk of serious injury or death to the student or others and only for the period of time necessary to eliminate such risk. The bill requires each school district to develop and publish a training protocol for the use of restraints. [Read more.](#)



Sen. Lauren Book (D-Plantation), sponsor of SB 260 - Students with Disabilities in Public Schools.

Financial Stability: A Civil Remedy for Elder Abuse



Sen. Kathleen Passidomo (R-Naples) presents a bill in committee.

Florida is home to 3.3 million residents age 65 or older; 1 in 20 Florida residents are age 80 or older. Financial exploitation of vulnerable older adults is unfortunately all too common. It can take many forms, such as improper use of an elder's funds, property, or assets; cashing checks without permission; forging signatures; forcing or deceiving an older person into signing a document; or using an ATM/debit card without permission. Vulnerable adults residing in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and adult family care homes are particularly affected by financial exploitation. [SB 1562](#) (Passidomo, R-Naples) provides for protective injunction to be filed by, or on behalf of, a vulnerable adult in imminent danger of being exploited. The bill allows courts to grant a temporary injunction if certain conditions are met. It provides for remedies to protect the vulnerable adult or their assets, and creates standards for the court to follow when issuing an injunction. [Read more.](#)

Health: Senate Cuts \$19 Million from Healthy Start



Sen. Rob Bradley (R-Orange Park) presents the Senate budget.

Florida's Healthy Start program is a nationally recognized effort to reduce risks for poor maternal and child health outcomes. Healthy Start - and the coalitions through which they operate - assists pregnant women in finding needed health care and social support to help them have healthy babies. The program also helps new mothers, infants, and children up to age three with services including home visits, childbirth education/preparation, parenting education and support, nutrition counseling, smoking cessation, and breastfeeding education.

Although it is a critically important starting point for Florida's maternal and child health care system, the Senate 2018-2019 budget cuts Healthy Start funding by \$19 million, almost one-third of its entire budget. This will result in loss of services statewide to 6,600 high-risk pregnant women and infants in the Healthy Start home visiting/face to face services program and jeopardizes implementation of the new Healthy Start System of Care intended to ensure more collaboration and less duplication of services.

Bills to Watch



Week of February 12 - 16, 2018

SB 486 Child Care Facilities (Stewart; D-Orange) - Creates the "Child Safety Alarm Act"; requires vehicles used by child care facilities and large family child care homes to be equipped with a reliable alarm system that prompts the driver to inspect the vehicle for children before exiting the vehicle.

SB 1044 Victims of Human Trafficking (Book; D-Broward) - Citing this act as the "Civil Action for Victims of Human Trafficking and Prevention of Human Trafficking Act"; provides a civil cause of action for victims of human trafficking against a trafficker or facilitator; provides that such actions are not subject to a statute of limitations; provides an affirmative defense for public lodging establishments under certain circumstances.

HB 577 High School Graduation Requirements (Sivers; D-Palm Beach) - Authorizes student to use credit earned upon completion of apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship program to satisfy specified high school graduation requirements; requires State Board of Education to approve & identify registered apprenticeship & pre-apprenticeship programs.

SB 800 Infectious Disease Elimination Pilot Programs (Braynon; D-Broward/Miami-Dade) - Citing this act as the "Florida Infectious Disease Elimination Act (IDEA)"; authorizes the Department of Health to establish sterile needle and syringe exchange pilot programs upon request from eligible entities.

CS/HB 1175 Early Learning Coalitions (Sullivan; R-Lake/Orange) - Authorizes early learning coalition to refuse to contract with certain school readiness program providers.

HB 6021 Guardian Ad Litem Direct-Support Organization (Stevenson, R-St. Augustine) - Abrogates future repeal of provisions related to guardian ad litem direct-support organization.

SB 392 Juvenile Justice (Bracy, D-Ocoee) - Increases the age of a child at which a state attorney may, or is required to, request a court to transfer the child to adult court for criminal prosecution; increases the age of a child at which a state attorney may, or is required to, file an information against the child for prosecution as an adult, etc.

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Questions or Comments?

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