



## CAPITOL UPDATE

**Feb. 24, 2025**



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## February 24, 2025, Volume 25, Issue 1

### The 2025 Legislative Session Begins on March 4!

The Florida legislative session begins on March 4, 2025, and the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC) will continue to give you important information about proposed legislation and emerging issues.

The Senate President, Ben Albritton, and the Speaker of the House, Daniel Perez, have pledged to work on issues important to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families as well as other issues ranging from revitalizing rural areas to improving insurance coverage.

This is a good year to educate lawmakers about issues that are important to you and your family.

The FDDC actively works to streamline information and improve the accessibility of our work. This year we are including visual symbols to represent where a bill is in the legislative process. We hope you find that helpful. Please see the new symbols below.

Last week, bills regarding developmental disability issues started to make their way out of bill drafting.

Below are bills the Council supports or tracks. Keep in mind that bills usually must pass through three or four committees before getting to the full House or

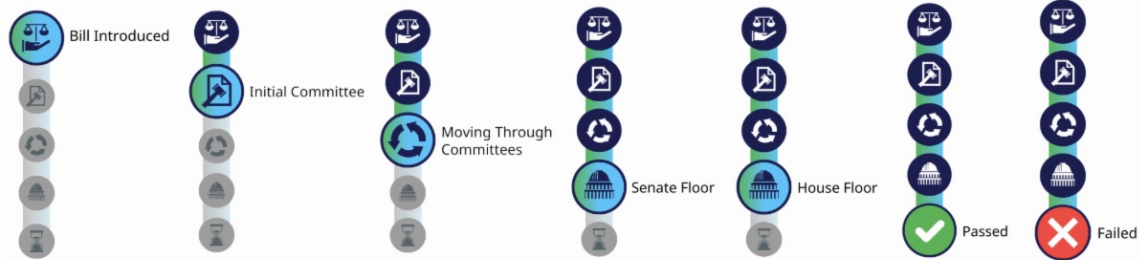
Senate chambers. Once in a chamber, bills are read three times before final passage and then sent to the other chamber for acceptance to end up with one bill to send to the Governor.

When the Governor receives a bill, he can sign it, let it become law without his signature, or veto the bill. The Legislature can overturn a veto the next time they meet by a two-thirds vote of both chambers.

Please click on bill links to track a bill's full journey through the legislative process.

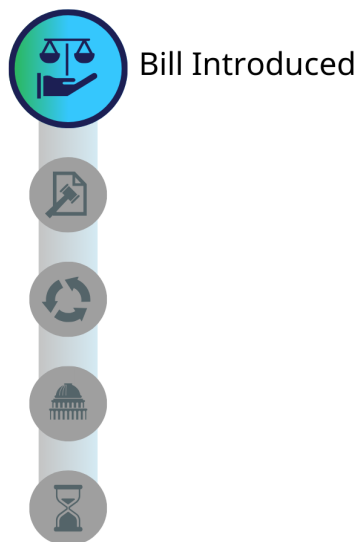
See the FDDC Legislative Platform

## CAPITOL UPDATE: KEY



**New for 2025:** next to each bill, you will see a graphic that indicates the stage at which the bill is in the legislative process.

## Important Bills to Watch



### [SB 460-Student Elopement by Arrington](#)

#### **Summary of Original Filed Text - 02/03/25**

The bill would create a framework for addressing student elopement in Florida public schools by establishing various requirements for planning and response.

The bill defines "elopement" as the act of a student with disabilities leaving supervision and mandates each public school to set up a School Staff Assistance for Emergencies (SAFE) team and a comprehensive elopement plan.

The bill specifies that the school principal and assistant principal, along with at least five other appointed members, will constitute the SAFE team. This team is responsible for developing, updating, and enacting the elopement plan.

The elopement plan would include detailed procedures for immediate actions

following an elopement, a structured search plan including a search grid of critical areas, and a communication strategy among all school personnel, security, and law enforcement.

There is directive language that the elopement plan be submitted annually to the district school board and authorizes the State Board of Education to adopt rules to implement the provisions effectively.

### **Identical Bill**

#### **[HB 0345 Student Elopement by Eskamani](#)**

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Bill Introduced



#### **[SB 112-Children with Developmental Disabilities by Harrell](#)**

##### **Summary of Original Filed Text - 02/05/25**

This bill expands the scope and services of healthcare and educational programs for children with developmental disabilities in Florida.

It amends the Cinotti Health Care Screening and Services Grant Program to include autism under eligible services and it creates the Early Steps Extended Option, extending eligibility for existing early intervention services until a child's fourth birthday.

The bill mandates local program offices to prepare for children's transitions out of the Early

Steps Program.

This bill establishes guidelines and funding priorities for startup grants managed by the University of Florida Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment aimed at supporting schools and summer programs for children with autism. It directs the Commissioner of Education to review and report on educational curricula for developmental disabilities, enhancing training for professionals with a focus on supporting students with autism.

### **Identical Bill**

#### **[HB 0591 Children with Developmental Disabilities by Maggard](#)**

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#### **[HB 377-Health Insurance Coverage for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities by Tant](#)**

##### **Summary of Original Filed Text - 02/04/25**

The bill revises definitions related to health insurance coverage for individuals with developmental disabilities, impacting Medicaid options and law enforcement training. It updates the definition of "autism spectrum disorder" to



Bill Introduced



match the most recent edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders by the American Psychiatric Association.

The bill changes the definition of "eligible individual" to expand criteria beyond age restrictions, focusing on the diagnosis of a developmental disability without specifying the age at diagnosis.

The bill reenacts specific statutes to adapt to the updated definitions impacting optional Medicaid services and law enforcement training regarding autism spectrum disorder and retains clauses regarding the adjustment of services based on budgetary constraints and the need for legislative approval for the implementation of new Medicaid services.

### Identical Bill

[SB 0756 Health Insurance Coverage for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities by Burton](#)



Bill Introduced



### [HB 447 - Disability History and Awareness Instruction by Salzman](#)

#### **Summary of Original Filed Text - 02/06/25**

This bill mandates comprehensive disability history and awareness instruction in schools, replacing prior optional guidelines with required educational content.

The bill designates the act as the "Evin B. Hartsell Act." It requires that for a two-week period, students receive intensive instruction on individuals with disabilities, including disability history and the disability rights movement. The instructional content across educational levels includes:

- Grades K-3: Conversations on bullying and activities teaching about physical disabilities.
- Grades 4-6: Provides information and activities related to autism spectrum disorder.
- Grades 7-9: Includes content and activities about hearing impairments.
- Grades 10-12: Focuses on different types of learning and intellectual disabilities, with practical activities to illustrate these conditions.

The bill allows district school boards to collaborate with the Evin B. Hartsell Foundation for curriculum development.

### Identical Bill

[SB 0540 Disability History and Awareness Instruction by Collins](#)



Bill Introduced



## [HB 413 - Swimming Safety by Gossett-Seidman](#)

### Summary of Original Filed Text - 02/05/25

This bill enhances water safety requirements and regulations for children, particularly those with autism, at public swimming areas and prohibits organizations from allowing children access to public bathing places or pools without swimming proficiency verification from a parent or legal guardian.

The bill requires organizations to provide U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation devices (for public bathing places and pools) to children identified as non-swimmers or at-risk and allows organizations to refuse water access to children without the required documentation

and penalizes organizations for non-compliance by allowing disciplinary actions, including administrative penalties.

This bill includes changes to the "Residential Swimming Pool Safety Act," now part of a broader "Swimming Pool and Public Water Safety Act," reinforcing safety barriers and pool standards.

### Similar Bill

[SB 0568 Swimming Safety by Rodriguez](#)



Bill Introduced



## [SB 102 - Exceptional Student Education by Gaetz](#)

### Summary of Original Filed Text - 12/17/24

A bill mandates the development and implementation of a workforce credential program for students with autism spectrum disorder by the Department of Education. It mandates the Department of Education to develop and implement a workforce credential program by January 31, 2026, specifically designed for students with autism spectrum disorder to aid in securing employment upon graduation.

Requires the program to allow students to earn badges that demonstrate the acquisition of skills needed by employers, with each badge

representing five discrete skills, including workplace safety.

Specifies that the validation of each badge must be done by two members of the instructional staff who specialize in exceptional student education.

SB 102 directs the Department of Education to produce an annual report from 2026 through 2030, which includes details on the badges offered, data on post-graduation employment, student participation rates, and other relevant



outcome data.

## Similar Bill

[HB 0127 Exceptional Student Education by Kendall](#)



**ADVOCACY TOOLKIT**  
Make an impact in your local community to support developmental disabilities advocacy.

- PLAN A LOCAL DD DAY EVENT
- HOW TO TELL YOUR STORY
- CONTACT THE MEDIA
- CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATORS

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Florida Developmental Disabilities Council | 124 Marriott Drive Suite 203 | Tallahassee, FL 32301 US

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