



## CAPITOL UPDATE

April 21, 2025



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### April 21, 2025 - Volume 25, Issue 9

#### **Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities need continued access to affordable and reliable transportation services through the Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund and Innovative Service Development Grant**

Access to affordable and reliable transportation services continues to be a top-ranked barrier to full participation in the community by Florida's citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Key barriers include limited access to on-demand, 24-hour-a-day service; limited availability of transportation for a variety of trip purposes; and cost-prohibitive trip charges. These factors impede the ability of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) to maintain employment and to access their community.

The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC) found that using transportation voucher programs for individuals with disabilities is a very cost-effective way to provide transportation to a population who often need door-to-door transportation services. Customer satisfaction is high, and providers were able to provide more trips for up to half the cost in most instances. **These programs help to keep people with disabilities employed, especially in rural areas of their region.**

It is important to keep funding the Innovative Services Grant. Many rural and smaller regions need state funding to keep their programs running. **Without this funding thousands of individuals will lose access to transportation that gets them to and from their jobs.**

**The FDDC is supporting \$6,000,000 to be used by the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged to continue the Innovative Service Development Grant program.** Funds would be used to provide competitive grants to community transportation coordinators and non-traditional transportation service providers, such as transportation network companies (TNC), that provide door-to-door, on-demand, or scheduled transportation services for innovative service delivery that are more cost-efficient for the program and time-efficient for users.

*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. The information on the status of bills is current as of Thursday, April 17, 2025.**

[See the FDDC Legislative Platform](#)

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## CAPITOL UPDATE: KEY

The diagram illustrates the legislative process through a series of icons and labels. It starts with 'Bill Introduced' (scales icon), followed by 'Initial Committee' (document icon), 'Moving Through Committees' (circular arrows icon), 'Senate Floor' (Senate building icon), and 'House Floor' (House building icon). The process concludes with 'Passed' (green checkmark icon) and 'Failed' (red X icon). Each stage is represented by a vertical stack of icons, with the current stage highlighted in a larger, colored circle.

**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.

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## Important Bills to Watch

[SB 460-Student Elopement by Arrington](#)  
Summary of Original Filed Text - 02/03/25



Bill Introduced



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](#)

**Passed first committee**



Senate Floor



[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 disabilities, enhancing training for professionals with a focus on supporting students with autism.

### Identical Bill

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

House floor

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Bill Introduced



#### [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 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](#)

Senate floor

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

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

This bill provides an option for 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



House Floor

individuals with disabilities, including disability history and the disability rights movement. The instructional content across educational levels includes:

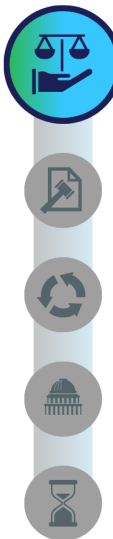
- Grades K-3: Conversations on bullying and activities teaching about physical disabilities.
- Grades 4-6: Provides information and activities related to autism spectrum disorder.
- Grades 7-9: Includes content and activities about hearing impairments.
- Grades 10-12: Focuses on different types of learning 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](#)

Senate floor



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](#)

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

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



Senate Floor

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](#)

House floor

[SB 1156 - Home Health Aide for Medically Fragile Children Program by Harrell](#)

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



Moving Through Committees

This bill revises training and operational requirements for the Home Health Aide for Medically Fragile Children Program to improve care and coordination.

The bill specifies family caregiver training to include minimum hours of theoretical instruction, skills tailored to the child's care needs and directed clinical training. It also establishes a Medicaid fee schedule for home health aides at a minimum rate of \$25 per hour with a daily cap of 12 hours per child, requiring justification for additional hours.

The bill mandates a swift federal approval process for Medicaid waivers or amendments to include private duty nursing and home health providers in the program and exempt home health aide income from public assistance eligibility



considerations.

Lastly, the bill requires an annual program assessment detailing caregiver satisfaction, support needs, hospitalization rates, adverse incidents, and comparison data between home health aides and registered or licensed nurses.

### Similar Bills

[HB 1529 Home Health Aide for Medically Fragile Children Program by Tramont](#)

Moving through committees



Moving Through Committees

### [SB 412 - Repair of Motorized Wheelchairs by Smith \(C\)](#)

Summary of Original Filed Text - 01/30/25

This bill establishes requirements for the availability of motorized wheelchair repair resources under the "Motorized Wheelchair Right to Repair Act."

The bill mandates that original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) provide documentation, parts, and tools necessary for diagnosing, maintaining, or repairing motorized wheelchairs, including updates, on fair and reasonable terms.

The purpose of the bill is to offer more options for wheelchair repair and the bill stipulates that any contractual provision attempting to waive or limit OEM obligations under this act are void and enforces violations of these provisions under the Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act.

### Similar Bills

[HB 0311 Repair of Motorized Wheelchairs by Eskamani](#)

House floor

### [SB 1050 - Agency for Persons with Disabilities by Bradley](#)

Summary of Original Filed Text - 02/24/25

The Committee substitute of this bill enhances services for individuals with developmental disabilities through several key provisions and requirements targeting state agencies and Medicaid programs. It removed the Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services merger to APD and expands the developmental disabilities managed care pilot to cover the whole state.



Moving Through Committees

- There is language that requires the Agency for Persons with Disabilities to post quarterly reconciliation reports on its website within five days of submission to other bodies.
- The bill includes requirements for an online application system for crisis enrollment under the developmental disabilities services and eliminates the removal of individuals from pre-enrollment due to inability to contact or verify eligibility.
- The "Adult Pathways Home and Community-based Services Medicaid waiver program" is established to cater to adults with developmental disabilities, setting out specific eligibility, disenrollment criteria, and types of services covered.
- A Statewide Family Care Council is introduced and delineates its duties, member compositions, and operational protocols, including interaction with local family care councils.
- Procedures are modified and benefits extended under an established pilot program for individuals with developmental disabilities, specifying voluntary enrollment, eligibility, provider qualifications, and required assessments.

### Similar Bill

#### [HB 1103 Agency for Persons with Disabilities by Kincart Jonsson](#)

Passed first committee as a committee substitute that removes the Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services merger to APD and expands the developmental disabilities managed care pilot to cover the whole state.

**House Floor**



House Floor

#### [HB 257 - Exceptional Students and Video Cameras in Public Schools by Chambliss, Tramont](#)

##### **Summary of Original Filed Text - 01/27/25**

The bill mandates that each public and charter school with self-contained classrooms must install video cameras and stipulates that cameras must monitor and record all classroom areas, excluding restrooms and changing areas.

The bill specifies that recordings must be retained for a minimum of three months or until all associated investigations and legal actions are resolved and designates school principals as custodians of the video cameras and recordings, detailing protocols for viewing and handling recordings.

Immediate family and legal authorities are allowed to view recordings for investigation purposes within specified conditions and timelines.





[HB 299 - Elevator Accessibility Requirements by Woodson](#)

**Summary of Original Filed Text - 01/29/25**

The bill amends Florida Statutes to specify requirements for support rails in elevator car interiors for accessibility.

The bill would require that

- Each elevator car must have at least one continuous support rail.
- The support rail must be between 31 and 33 inches high from the floor, not exceeding 2 1/2 inches in diameter.
- The minimum length of the support rail must be 42 inches.

**Identical Bill**

[SB 0960 Elevator Accessibility Requirements by Bernard](#)

**Passed first committee**

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[HB 711 - Spectrum Alert by Borrero, Campbell CoSponsors: Booth, Grow, Maggard, Partington](#)

**Summary of Original Filed Text - 02/19/25**

The bill establishes the Spectrum Alert in Florida to address safety risks associated with children who have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) prone to wandering, particularly leading to accidents or deaths from drowning and traffic accidents. The bill requires the Department of Law Enforcement to work with transportation, highway safety, lottery departments, and local law enforcement to create and implement the Spectrum Alert. The bill also includes the following:

- Instructs these departments to collaboratively develop a training program and alert system compatible with existing emergency systems, focusing on improving responses to missing ASD children incidents.
- Mandates the implementation of crisis intervention training for law enforcement to better manage interactions with ASD children.
- Specifies that policies and procedures be set for handling reported missing ASD children, including quick dissemination of information and

- informing relevant emergency and law enforcement personnel.
- Stipulates increased awareness efforts to understand autism-related elopement risks and strengthen community support for ASD children.

## Identical Bill

### [SB 0500 Spectrum Alert by Ávila](#)

#### Moving through committees



House Floor



### [HB 877 - School Readiness Program by Bartleman, Trabulsy Co-Sponsors: Campbell, López, J., Partington](#)

Why I Filed This Bill (by Representative Bartleman): This bill addresses the challenges children with disabilities face in early childhood education. Logan, a child with autism, was expelled from six different preschools because they could not accommodate his needs. Without consistency and proper support, children like Logan face significant barriers to early education. The expulsion rate in early education is three times higher than K-12 combined. Students with disabilities must be provided a stable learning environment with teachers trained to meet their unique needs. Currently, early learning providers are paid an increased

rate from ELCs for enrolling a student with a disability. Providers receive these additional dollars as an incentive; however, there is no training requirement for teachers. This bill will require training for all providers who choose to take advantage of this increased rate. This bill incentivizes early learning providers to accommodate students with special needs and equips teachers with the training necessary to manage these students so that they can maintain a classroom conducive to all learners. It also requires training for autism screenings and increases access to after-school programs. Early identification is key, and it is vital that every child is provided with a strong foundation.

### Summary of Original Filed Text - 02/21/25

This bill

- Reassigns participation priority in the School Readiness Program by emphasizing children from economically disadvantaged working families, at-risk children, and children mandating special accommodations validated by qualified professionals.
- Introduces specific requirements for children with special needs, including a validated IEP, individual family support plan, diagnosed special need, or determined accommodations.
- Establishes eligibility for additional funding for providers caring for children meeting enhanced criteria, including those under subsection (6) of revised statute.
- Creates a special needs differential allocation which school readiness providers can access if they meet program standards, undertake specific training, and fulfill ongoing educational requirements by July 1, 2027.

## Identical Bills



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