



Capital Office for Administrative, Accreditation & Legislative Services

January 16, 2016

TO: All FACCS Administrators  
FROM: Dr. Howard G. Burke, FACCS Executive Director  
RE: FACCS Capital Report

The first week of the Florida 2016 Legislative session saw a flurry of activity from the very beginning that has a beneficial impact on children with “unique disabilities” being able to access services not previously available. The bills actually expand scholarships for students with disabilities, whether in pre-kindergarten, K-12 or post secondary programs, and offer financial-literacy training. This opportunity adds to options under the Personal Learning Savings Accounts passed in the previous session. Also, the proposals would encourage businesses and state agencies to hire people with disabilities and create a clearinghouse of information for families.

Other bills in the "unique abilities" package include a measure (SB 388), filed by Sen. Nancy Detert, R-Venice, that would create a program to recognize businesses that employ people with developmental disabilities. The House version (HB 7003) by Rep. Matt Caldwell, R-North Fort Myers, overlaps with a proposal (SB 376), filed by Sen. Dorothy Hukill, R-Port Orange, that would create a financial literacy program for people with developmental disabilities. Caldwell's bill also overlaps with a Senate proposal (SB 7010), filed by Sen. Jeremy Ring, D-Margate, that would seek to build a long-term commitment by state agencies and organizations to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Having passed in both Houses the President of the Senate's legislation will proceed to the Governor.

Additional action **this past week** centered on FL H 7039 regarding Extracurricular Activities via the FHSAA and the issue of recruitment violation which would facilitate the suspension of a teachers certificate. Additionally FL H 31 by Spano was considered regarding high school activities; FL H 585 by Burgess regarding Instruction for Homebound and Hospitalized Students; FL S 520 by Lee relating to Bright Futures Scholarships; FL S 684 by Gaetz regarding additional options in sports including the single selection of a sport under the FHSAA, CAPE digital schools, etc. & FL S 1026 by Simmon on athletic fees and contest receipts.

During earlier committee meetings HB 43 by Rep. Plakon (referred to as the “*Pastor Protection Act*,” was passed by the Civil Justice Subcommittee (9-4). The bill provides that churches or religious organizations, or individuals employed by these entities, including clergy, may not be required to solemnize any marriage or provide services, facilities or goods

for related purposes if such action would violate sincerely held religious beliefs. The bill protects these entities and individuals from certain legal actions, penalties, or government sanctions.

Following the U.S. Supreme Court's *Obergefell* decision that redefined marriage to accommodate same sex couples, religious freedom certainly requires protection in the face of so many uncertainties under the law. Layers of protection in law can be helpful, especially if they stave off frivolous litigation. It is hopeful that the Florida legislature will enact robust protections for religious and moral convictions related to marriage. Such protections especially need to be defined for individuals and agencies licensed by the State of Florida to provide various services, such as foster care and adoption. HB 43 will be heard next by the House Judiciary Committee. Companion measure SB 110 by Senator Bean (R-Jacksonville) waits to be heard by its first committee of reference.

**This coming week** several of the bills that are noted above will be continuing their journey through the legislative hearing and Floor process including FL S 520, FL H 585, FL H 7039, FL S 806 as noted above. New additions in various committees will be FL H 1125 by McBurne that prohibits certain persons from serving as child care personnel in public or private centers, FL H 705 by Berman defining educational interpreters and setting out instructional personnel qualifications. Additionally an interesting FL H 887 by Adkins which will allow two years of computer coding to substitute and have the same merit as two years of a high school foreign language. There will also be a significant effort to redesign the oversight of Charter schools by Constitutional Revision in through FL HJR 759 and an expansion of educational choice initiatives for public and private schools, open enrollment and Credit Acceleration Programs under FL H 669 by Sprowls.

**For a more comprehensive listing of the legislation being tracked by the FACCS Capital Office, please visit from time to time the FACCS web site at [www.FACCS.org](http://www.FACCS.org) as bills are added frequently and others removed if withdrawn.**

**Finally as a side note** for those that are interested: On January 19, 2016 several thousand students and parents are anticipated meeting at the Florida Capital to highlight the importance and benefit of the various CHOICE Scholarships. The additional purpose is to promote parental empowerment in education and the ability of parents to choose the best educational environments for their children. Rally organizer, Florida Voices for Choices, anticipates this event will be among the largest school choice rallies in our nation's history.

Rally participants will urge plaintiffs to drop a pending legal challenge (*McCall v. Scott*) to the Florida Tax Credit (FTC) Scholarship Program for children of low-income families. "The FTC program provides some of our most vulnerable children and their families access to high-quality educational opportunities that best meet the needs of the student and offer the greatest potential for success."

Participants will march from the Donald L. Tucker Tallahassee Civic Center a few blocks to the Florida Capitol where Martin Luther King III is scheduled to be the keynote speaker. Others scheduled to speak include school choice and civil rights advocates, a scholarship

student and parents.

For more details on the rally and the affiliated groups check out the web site at:

<http://www.flvoicesforchoice.org>

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