



HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



REPRESENTATIVE RAY RODRIGUES, MAJORITY LEADER

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Bill Filed to Strengthen Florida's 'Texting While Driving'

This week HB 33 – Texting While Driving – was filed in the House of Representatives. This bill changes the method of enforcement of the texting while driving ban by moving from secondary enforcement to primary enforcement. The bill also includes safeguards to protect individuals' privacy rights by ensuring that law enforcement officers follow certain protocols during a traffic stop for a violation of the ban.

Texting and driving presents a real, life-threatening danger to Floridians both on and off the road. I believe that providing law enforcement the ability to enforce the 'Texting While Driving' ban as a primary offense will help save lives. I'm confident that this bill also establishes the proper balance between safety and protecting our civil liberties. I look forward to updating you further on the progress of this great bill.

House Committee Advances Bill to Hold Public Employee Unions Accountable

This week the Government Accountability Committee passed HB 25, which reforms the annual public employee union registration renewal process to increase transparency and accountability. HB 25 requires public employee unions to be more transparent and accountable by requiring them to report the number of employees in the bargaining unit who are eligible for representation by the union and the number of employees represented by the union who do and do not pay dues to the union. If 50 percent or more of employee eligible to participate in the union do not pay dues, the union must reapply for certification. A union that does not comply with these requirements will have its certification revoked. Unions that represent law enforcement officers, firefighters, and corrections officers are not included in the recertification changes.

HB 25 is a positive step in increasing transparency and holding public employee unions accountable to the workers they represent.

Florida House Committee Reviews Recommendations to Improve the State's Hurricane Response

The Select Committee on Hurricane Response & Preparedness held a workshop this week to discuss preliminary member recommendations on ways to improve our state's hurricane response measures. The Committee encouraged members to submit their ideas on how to improve our state's response to hurricanes, and members' delivered. There were 141 recommendations that address the following issues: evacuation; electric utilities and petroleum; shelters and vulnerable populations; health care facilities and medical care; agriculture; future hurricane expenditures and tax relief; housing; beaches; sanitary sewers; flooding; debris removal; and education.



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During the next few weeks, House members will have the opportunity to review, discuss, and determine the best recommendations for the Committee to consider before its final meeting.

I strongly support the efforts of the Committee to examine how our states can best prepare for the next hurricane. I will continue to keep you updated as your Florida House works to protect our community and state.

House Committee Passes “Certificate of Need” Reform

This week, the Health & Human Services Committee passed House Bill 27 to eliminate the state’s “Certificate of Need” (CON) program for hospitals.

The CON program, administered by the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA), requires certain health care providers to obtain state approval before entering the market or offering certain new or expanded services. The CON program currently regulates hospices, skilled nursing facilities, intermediate care facilities for the developmentally disabled, hospitals and certain specialized hospital services.

The CON program reduces competition in the health care market, causing unnecessary and unfair cost increases for consumers. These market-entry barriers prevent or delay innovation, and they incentivize competitors to push each other out of the market with lawsuits rather than competing based on quality.

HB 27 removes hospitals and hospital-based services from Florida’s CON review program. As a result, any person wishing to build or replace a hospital, or establish specialized services in a hospital, need only go through the AHCA licensure process. If an applicant can meet the licensure statutes and regulations, the applicant will be permitted to offer new or additional hospital facilities or services to patients in the state without first obtaining a CON from AHCA.

I am proud to support this bill as it reduces costs and increases quality of care for Floridians.

House Subcommittee Receives Update on Scholarship Program Successes

This week, the House Prek-12 Innovation Subcommittee heard from expert speakers about scholarship programs requirements and outcomes from across the nation and in.

The first study focused on the Florida Tax Credit (FTC) Scholarship Program and its effects on students and college enrollment. The FTC Scholarship Program expands educational opportunities for children of families with limited financial resources by offering scholarships to eligible private schools.. The study revealed that the longer a student is in the program, the more likely they are to enroll in college.

The second presentation, focused on scholarship programs from across the country and the balance between regulation and participation of private schools in those programs The presentation drew upon various studies and concentrated on specific areas of regulation including: health and safety; academics; and financial viability. The presentation highlighted the differences within types of scholarship programs such as student participation and program purposes and stressed that too much regulation can lead to



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less participation of private schools and thus, fewer choices for parents, and Florida appeared to have a good balance of both in comparison to other states. .

Finally, a panel of stakeholders including private schools, scholarship funding organizations and Department of Education shared with members their current roles, responsibilities and how the current regulations within Florida's scholarship programs are working. Panel members offered several suggestions for improvements to current law that would strengthen accountability while still allowing private schools to be innovative, and responsive to the needs of parents and their children.

I am pleased with Florida's showing in the national reports and am encouraged by the discussion and recommendations by our stakeholders to improve accountability measures. We look forward to working together to ensure high-quality choices for all parents and students in Florida.

Florida House Reviews Medical Marijuana Implementation

This week, the House Health Quality Subcommittee received an update from the Department of Health's (DOH) Office of Medical Marijuana Use (OMMU) on SB 8-A, which implements the medical marijuana amendment to the Florida Constitution .

During the update, OMMU informed the subcommittee that DOH is currently developing rules for: Medical Marijuana Treatment Centers (MMTC) license applications, MMTC fines, edibles, pesticide use, MMTC license renewals, labeling and packaging, dosing, and testing laboratory certification.

Additionally, OMMU provided updates on inspections and authorizations. During the last two months, DOH has conducted five cultivation facility inspections, two procession facility inspections, and ten dispensing facility inspections.

OMMU also informed the committee of a new, weekly update regarding the status of the state's medical marijuana implementation, which is posted on their website. These updates include the total number of patients in the registry (57,000), qualified physicians (1,233), approved MMTCs (13), approved Retail Dispensing Locations (24), processing time for complete paper applications (30 days), processing time for complete online applications (18 days), and approved ID card applications (39,000). This represents an increase of 167 qualified physicians and 7,000 qualified patients since the November 15th update.

Your Florida House will continue to ensure that the medical marijuana program is operated securely and safely in our communities.