



HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



REPRESENTATIVE DANE EAGLE, MAJORITY LEADER

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PreK-12 Innovation Subcommittee Discussed Public School Choice

The PreK-12 Innovation Subcommittee met last Wednesday to discuss public school choice options in Florida, which include public charter schools, controlled open enrollment, magnet schools, virtual schools, and career readiness programs.

The subcommittee heard from several superintendents and school district administrators from around the state and discussed how school choice programs have helped their communities. For example, Career & Technical Education programs offered in their districts have helped improve graduation rates and give students the skills necessary to prepare them for the workforce or postsecondary education. I believe their testimony is a reminder of how important school choice is to the success of our state.

The subcommittee also received a presentation on the charter school sector from the Department of Education. Department staff provided information on the stringent accountability and reporting requirements for public charter schools, and the members learned of programs such as Schools of Hope, which helps to place effective school models in neighborhoods where students have been underserved by persistently failing schools.

In my opinion, the meeting clearly showed that the more educational choices for students, the better. I will make sure to keep you informed of all developments on this important issue and look forward to supporting any and all measures that promote more educational options for our children.

Florida House Health Quality Subcommittee Evaluated Primary Care Shortages

Last week, the House Health Quality Subcommittee prepared for the upcoming Legislative Session by addressing an important health care topic: primary care shortages.

The subcommittee was briefed on rising concerns within Florida's healthcare workforce by the Department of Health, who provided an overview of physician workforce issues. Currently, Florida ranks 24th among the 50 states in active physicians per 100,000 population. Specifically, our state has, as of January 2, 2019, 570 Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs). This includes 230 primary care HPSAs, 142 mental health HPSAs, and 198 dental health HPSAs. The overview provided highlighted the fact that we need to reengineer our healthcare workforce industry and ease limitations to its expansion.

The Florida Center for Nursing provided the subcommittee with an overview of our state's nursing workforce problems. Our state is currently experiencing an increase in demand for nurses due to population growth, an aging population, and expanded health care access. The demand for registered nurses, advanced practice registered nurses, and licensed practical nurses is becoming a slow moving crisis



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given the plateauing growth of the nursing workforce. We must prepare accordingly in order to meet the new healthcare reality our great state will face.

Our new healthcare reality will require us to readjust our dated views on our current healthcare workforce. Floridians need and deserve to have a stable continuation of healthcare services, and we must ensure it is possible. Your Florida House is seeking the best ways to grant every Floridian greater access to quality healthcare.

Energy & Utility Subcommittee Discussed Utility Restoration in the Aftermath of Hurricanes

Last week, the subcommittee heard from the Florida Public Service Commission and representatives of the electric utility industry to discuss preparations made in advance of hurricanes and tropical storms and service restoration following those storms.

The Commission presented its 2018 Review of Florida's Electric Utility Hurricane Preparedness and Restoration Activities, which evaluated data from the 2016-2017 hurricane seasons. In its review, the Commission found that Florida's aggressive storm hardening, vegetation management, and pole inspection programs are working, as the length and scope of outages were reduced markedly from the catastrophic 2004-2005 storm seasons.

The committee also heard from electric utility companies that were directly impacted by Hurricane Michael in 2018. This catastrophic storm affected 15 counties in the Big Bend region. Of these, 11 counties reported outages of over 80% and 4 counties reported outages of 100%. There were close to 20,000 restoration personnel utilized from all over the country. The utilities detailed their hurricane preparedness strategies and their efforts to get the power back on for those effected by this disaster.

Having power can be the difference between life and death for our citizens, and I believe effectively responding to disasters such as a hurricane is of paramount importance. In my view, this meeting showed that our hurricane preparedness and response is improving and we must continue to build on our success.

Florida House Health Market Reform Subcommittee Assessed the 2016 Transparency in Healthcare Bill

Last week, the House Health Market Reform Subcommittee reviewed the implementation of HB 1175 from 2016 dealing with transparency in healthcare.

Molly McKinstry, Deputy Secretary for Health Quality Assurance at the Agency for Health Care Administration briefed the subcommittee on the implementation of HB 1175. The transparency in healthcare legislation included changes to consumer access to health care charge estimates, consumer access to information on billing collection practices, and transparent facility prices. Even with the great impact this legislation had on the healthcare industry, deficiencies still remain. Specifically, a number of deficiencies have occurred with timely and accurate information, timely response to billing questions, and website postings. With that in mind, we must act in order to raise our health care transparency standards to the level that Floridians deserve.



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We are committed to improving healthcare transparency within our state. Your Florida House will continue to work on empowering patients by increasing their access to healthcare pricing and information.

Florida House Committee Received Recommendations from Marjory Stoneman Douglas Public Safety Commission

Last week, the Education Committee received an update on the implementation of SB 7026 and heard recommendations for legislation from the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Public Safety Commission.

In 2018, the Florida Legislature passed SB 7026 in response to the tragic shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. The bill addressed school security, inter-agency information sharing and coordination, mental health, and created the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Public Safety Commission within the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

The Commission was established to investigate what happened in Parkland and to give Legislators recommendations on school safety. In all, the Commission's investigators interviewed hundreds of people and reviewed a substantial amount of evidence. The Commission recommended suggestions ranging from expanding the Guardian Program, to mandating compliance by Florida school districts to immediately implement school hardening strategies.

In my view, this bill went a long way toward ensuring our students are safe, but there is still progress to be made. I believe it is our duty as a Legislature to protect our citizens, and I promise that when it comes to keeping Florida's children safe, no issue is too big or complex.

Agriculture & Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee Discussed Red Tide Response Efforts

Last week, the Agriculture & Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee met to discuss the response efforts from state agencies to help fight algal blooms and red tide.

Algal blooms occur naturally in aquatic habitats, and are typically caused by areas with high nutrients, low water flow, and seasonal shifts. Specifically, blue-green algae devastated our states east and west coast economies this past summer primarily along the Caloosahatchee River and St. Lucie River.

Red tide, like blue-green algae, is a naturally occurring phenomenon, but it is formed many miles offshore. High concentrations of red tide brought inshore produce toxins that kill fish, birds, and marine mammals, and cause respiratory health hazards to humans in the affected area.

In 2016, the Department of Environmental Protection created an Algal Bloom Hotline Portal to allow citizens to report sightings of algal blooms and red tide in their communities. The portal works in coordination with the Department of Health and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to maximize response efforts to algal blooms and red tide. Additional response and prevention efforts that have been taken include red tide control trials and enhanced hatchery production.



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In 2018, the state of Florida provided financial assistance to local governments in the sum of \$19 million to specifically address the outbreak of both algal blooms and red tide. So far, \$2.7 million has been used for blue-green algae relief and \$14.6 million for red tide relief. \$1.7 million out of the \$19 million is remaining.

Our state's way of life depends on the health of our environment and water quality. I will work to ensure that the Legislature continues to take the appropriate measures to make sure our environment and water quality are as healthy as possible.

Florida House Health Market Reform Subcommittee Reviewed Concerns within Florida's Health Insurance Market

Last week, the House Health Market Reform Subcommittee reviewed concerns within Florida's health insurance market.

The Office of Insurance Regulation informed the subcommittee on real issues facing Florida's health insurance market. Prior to Obamacare, our state was averaging around 17 entities writing individual insurance policies; currently, our state has only 9. Obamacare led to a decrease in the amount of healthcare insurance options available to the average Floridian. Floridians deserve to have a stable continuation of healthcare options.

Your Florida House will shape a strong competitive insurance market while maintaining protections for the insurance-buying public. We will advance free market principles and policies into the health insurance marketplace to make healthcare serve your needs.

House Subcommittee Received Overview on School Improvement

Last Wednesday, the PreK-12 Quality Subcommittee received an overview of research on school improvement. The presentation showed how tools passed in HB 7069 are improving low performing schools. One such tool gives school districts the authority to negotiate with teacher unions. A number of districts are negotiating greater flexibility to staff D and F schools with the best teachers.

The subcommittee also received a presentation from the Department of Education on teacher recruitment and retention. According to the Department, three-quarters of Florida's teachers who began teaching five years ago are still in Florida's classrooms. The presentation highlighted the many pathways applicants have to become certified teachers in the state. The certification process ensures the highest quality applicants enter the classroom.

Florida's process for teacher certification makes sure that the best teachers enter the classroom on day one and the same teachers are staying in Florida, building their careers and lives in our state. I look forward to supporting any measure that will further improve our schools and will ensure that all children in Florida receive a high quality education.



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Florida House Health Quality Subcommittee Reviewed Opioid Bill from 2018

Last week, the House Health Quality Subcommittee reviewed the implementation of HB 21 from 2018 dealing with controlled substances.

Lucy C. Gee, Division Director for Medical Quality Assurance at the Department of Health updated the subcommittee on the progress made in implementing HB 21. The comprehensive controlled substances legislation included changes to standards of practice for acute pain, prescribing limits for acute pain, increased continuing education requirements, and mandatory consultation of the prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP). In total, all of these components from HB 21 have been a solid step forward on our campaign to take control of controlled substances.

The Department provides an excellent source for information to assist constituents – both patients and physicians - flhealthsource.gov/FloridaTakeControl/.

The Florida House will continue to support and monitor policies that will bring a resolution to opioid addiction and suffering. This crisis requires all of us to take a stand and help our family, friends, and community. If you or someone you know is suffering with an opioid addiction please contact 1-800-662-HELP (4357).

Insurance & Banking Subcommittee Received Update on Workers' Compensation

Last week, the subcommittee received an overview of benefits administration, attorney fees, and litigation in the Florida's workers' compensation system.

Workers' compensation is the injured employee's remedy for "compensable" workplace injuries. According to the Department of Financial Services, Florida's workers' compensation system is in an era of market stability and rate decreases, but the presenter did caution the committee to be aware of the factors that could end this trend.

In 2016, Florida courts found parts of Florida's workers' compensation law unconstitutional, including the provision limiting attorney fees for litigated workers' compensation cases. Since the court's decision, attorney fees have increased. In fact, attorney fees related to the settlement of cases have increased significantly; hourly rates have almost doubled, and injured workers are receiving less of their settlement dollars because of it.

I believe it is important for our state to uphold the intent behind workers' compensation, which is "to ensure the quick and efficient delivery of disability and medical benefits to injured workers and to facilitate their return to gainful reemployment at a reasonable cost to the employer."

I look forward to closely following this issue as Session starts and will update you on any new developments.



Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee talked Workforce Education

Last week, the Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee heard presentations from the Florida Department of Education on district workforce education in Florida.

The different types of district workforce education programs include career certificate, applied technical diploma, apprenticeships, and adult general education. These programs provide the tools necessary for our students, from all walks of life, to have the opportunity at gainful employment.

I support any measure that gives opportunities for our citizens to become successful members of the workforce and I believe workforce education is vital to the state's economy.

Judiciary Committee Received Update on the Criminal Justice Data Transparency Initiative

Last week, the Judiciary Committee received an update on the Criminal Justice Data Transparency Initiative created by SB 1932 in 2018. The presentation highlighted the progress of the Initiative in expanding the collection of criminal justice data, and bringing uniformity across the state.

The new law centralizes the majority of criminal justice data by requiring the clerks of court, state attorneys, public defenders, county jail operators, and the Department of Corrections to collect specific data elements and transmit them to FDLE, which will publish the data on its website and make it searchable. The new law also established a pilot program in the Sixth Judicial Circuit, consisting of Pasco and Pinellas Counties.

I am pleased with the progress of implementation of this incredibly complex and important data transparency initiative and the progress made to date to implement the Initiative. I believe it will improve our criminal justice system and make Florida a safer place for us all.

National School Choice Week

Last week was National School Choice Week, which aims to raise public awareness on all the different types of education options for children. The options include traditional public schools, charter schools, magnet schools, virtual education, private schools, scholarship programs, and homeschooling.

I believe National School Choice Week serves as an important reminder that we must continue fighting for educational freedom so that all children have the best opportunity at success.