

## Legislative Agenda Issues

Formatting example:

Agenda issue: Improve the quality of Florida's prekindergarten program utilizing research proven quality components which include degreed teachers; student to teacher ratios and XXXX.

Problem statement: Florida is (talk about how we are doing badly) the state ranks X out of X for access but the program only meets X of the 10 quality benchmarks placing Florida in the bottom X.

Data:  
(top 5/7 datapoints)

Recommendations:  
Suggested legislative fixes

Previously filed legislation: SB XXX in 20XX attempted to place degree teachers in pre-k classrooms and failed in its second committee of reference. A similar bill was filed in 20XX (bill number), 20XX (bill number), and 20XX (bill number).

\*State Success Stories: X added degree teachers in prek classrooms in 20XX and saw their quality ranking improve by X and their 3rd grade reading scores raise X levels.

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## Childcare & Early Education

- **Agenda Issue:** Improve the quality and outcomes of Florida's Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program. (Logan)
  - **Problem Statement:** *Florida currently hits only 2 out of 10 benchmarks for Prekindergarten. The abysmal quality of Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten program shortchanges children and does not give them the proper skills to be successful when they go on to elementary school. Florida ranks 42nd out of the 44 states that pay for pre-K classes. There is a 42% failure rate for Florida's VPK program. Even the governor has said this is "not defensible and certainly not good enough" for Florida's youngest learners. There is currently \$2,437 allocated per student while the state allocates \$19,069 per prisoner in the department of corrections. Based on funding, This clearly demonstrates a flawed system that does not prioritize the youth.*
  - **Data:**
    - Children in Florida begin Pre-K around the age of 4. Pre-K serves as a child's first step in the formal education system and the remainder of a child's education will be built upon the foundation of the child's Pre-K

experience. Currently, obtaining a college degree is not a requirement for all Pre-K teachers.

- Florida is a national leader PreK enrollment, but is close to the bottom of funding.
  - Florida's VPK program ranks second in the entire nation when it comes to the number of children in the VPK program. They serve more than 75% of the 4-year-old children in the state. However, Florida sadly comes close to last ranking 42nd in spending per child.
  - Spending even has fallen by \$3.9 million in the 2016-17 year. This is a drop of \$400 per child.
  - Even VPK performance in the state of Florida has drastically decreased. About 76% of students who went through Florida's VPK program tested ready for kindergarten in 2010. However, in 2017 year the number dropped to 54% of children were ready for kindergarten ([Florida Decrease in funding](#))
- Recommendations:
  - The Children's Campaign recommends five best practice actions the Florida legislature must sign into law to increase the quality of our VPK program: require degreed teachers, return to a 1:10 teacher-to-student ratio, increase staff professional development to 15 hours per year, expand vision, health and hearing screenings for students in receiving prekindergarten in private or religious schools, and require a CDA or equivalent minimum for assistant teachers. These recommendations by Early Education experts would improve the quality of VPK in Florida and ensure that children are getting the education they need.
    - ([TCC Top 5 Recommendations For Improving Pre-K Quality](#))
      - Require College Degree for Teachers
        - Education requirements to become a preschool teacher vary. An associates degree or high school diploma is acceptable for some childcare centers. Public schools however, require at least a bachelor's degree.
        - Preschool teachers are not required to have a bachelor's degree, but often employers prefer to hire teachers with one.
        - Most public preschools do require a Child Development Associate certificate. However, this certificate that can take as little as six months should not be a substitute for a four year degree.
        - Currently, there is no national standard for educational requirements for preschool teachers.
        - To be a VPK teacher in the state of Florida, the individual must be at least 18 years old and hold a

high school diploma or GED. They must also have a minimum of 120 hours of post secondary training in early childhood education, usually in; in addition, they must also have 480 hours of experience working with children ages 3 to 5. This will then lead to a Child Development Associate Certification. Candidates for this certification must also participate in a childhood literacy course approved by the state ([To become a VPK Teacher](#))

- s.1002.55(3)(c)1.a ([statues](#))
- Individuals who have a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, prekindergarten or primary education, or family and consumer science are automatically qualified to work as a VPK teacher.
  - s.1002.55(4)(b)
- Return to 1:10 teacher-to-children classroom ratio
  - Increases in school readiness and child achievement gains are increased by smaller class sizes. Even longer term benefits of reduced class sizes include higher rates of high school graduation and lower rates of delinquency and arrests later in life.
  - Numerous studies indicate that while reducing a class size will not unitarily improve the quality of an education program, it does however usually indicate that a VPK program is one of high quality. Further research even indicates that when teacher-to-child ratios are higher, teachers are able to provide a more stimulating and supportive interactions. This even allows teachers to provide more individualized attention, engage in dialogue with children, and provide more educational activities.
  - Data from the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development involved a sample of over 1,300 children from nine states showed that children in classrooms that met more of the recommended standards displayed greater school readiness and language comprehension and fewer behavioral problems at 36 months old. Thus the same study even found that smaller class sizes had greater gains in receptive language, general knowledge, and cooperative behavior with others. (website)

- The state of Tennessee offers clear evidence on the impact of reduced class sizes. Students assigned to smaller classes performed better than students in larger classes on all tests in every grade. The state even found positive impacts of small classes on student achievement, especially for minority students.
- The National Institute for Early Education Research explains why smaller classes make a difference. Their research concludes that teachers are able to devote more time to each child and observe each child's interest due to reduced class sizes ([National Institute for Early Education Research](#)).
- Increase staff professional development requirement to a minimum of 15 hours per year and provide coaching opportunities for in-school support for teachers
  - The Office of Head Start requires a minimum of 15 hours of professional development per year ([head start](#))
  - Research concludes that preschool teachers should have specialized preparation like knowledge of learning and developing specific to preschool age children. This should take the form of continuing education so teachers can be up to date on current research ([Preparing teachers for the Pre-K Classroom](#))
- Expand vision, health and hearing screenings requirements to students receiving pre-kindergarten in private or religious schools
- Require a CDA or equivalent minimum for assistant teachers
  - Preschool teacher's assistants help lead the teacher manage a classroom. They usually assist to plan activities for children like storytelling or art projects. They even instruct and supervise children in social and developmental activities. Having a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential is the most widely recognized credential in early childhood education. This will help assistant teachers better serve children who are all so different and help lead to better learning outcomes for the students as well ([Preschool teacher assistant](#)).

- Increase Early Learning funding to better serve the needs of children and to improve educational outcomes
- State Success Story:
  - Illinois, who ranked number 10 for Early Education when measuring enrollment and outcomes as of 2018, spends about \$4,226 per student as of 2017 and they still are a national leader for Early Education and PreK ([Best States for Early Education](#)).
  - Vermont, which is one of the highest ranked states for funding VPK programs spend \$6,878 per child in 2017. In 2017 they also had 75% of state population enrolled. This is drastically different than the \$2,177 per student that Florida allocates per child and Florida even has 2% more of the population enrolled. Vermont even ranks 4th in the country for PreK-12 rankings in the country vs. Florida ranking 27th. ([state rankings](#))
- Previously filed legislation:
  - SB 1334 was filed in 2018 by Senator Baxley. It would have required schools that are designated as one of the 300 lowest-performing elementary schools to include an Early Childhood Transition Team in their school improvement plans. The schools must implement these plans to assist the schools in implementing activities to improve students' transitions from Pre-K to Kindergarten.
  - SB 120 was filed in 2019 by Senator Perry. The Early Childhood Music Education Incentive Pilot Program had the purpose to assist selected district in implementing comprehensive music education programs for students in kindergarten through 2nd grade.
  - SB 1594 was filed by Senator Harrell in 2019 titled Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program. If this bill would have been passed, it would have shifted the method for assessing VPK programs from a kindergarten readiness rate to one screened during the VPK year. It would have also authorized the Department of Education to adopt procedures to calculate each public school's kindergarten readiness rate. The bill would have required the Office of Early Learning to adopt a methodology for calculating each VPK's program by examining program assessment scores, developmentally appropriate learning gain data from a pre and post-VPK assessment, and the results of the statewide end of pre-kindergarten screening. While no bills were addressed to increase funding, there were bills that were introduced, but later failed, that intended to improve the VPK program in the state of Florida.

## **Child Poverty**

- **Working Title: Adopt Recommended Practices to get rid of Hard Cliffs that are negatively affecting Florida's children and families (Joey)**  
 Florida ranks 36th in the nation for Child Poverty. In 2016, there were 842,396 (20.7%) Florida Children living in households with an income below the federal poverty level.

*Florida's child poverty rate remains worse than the U.S. average of 19.1%. Poverty has significant negative consequences on children's development and will likely worsen unless adequate funding is appropriated. In addition to allocating adequate funding, Florida must eliminate what are known as "Hard Cliffs." Hard Cliffs are rigid cutoff points for benefits pertaining to one's income, where having one dollar above the income cutoff means you lose all benefits. Hard Cliffs incentivise families to not accept promotions or pay increases in fear of having less money than before.*

- **Data:**

- Step-down benefits (Think reverse income tax)
- **Where could we legislatively make a change? Which bullet points would support this? How can we change our problem statement to reflect this?**
  - There are five recommendations from the Florida Chamber of Commerce about what to do regarding hard cliffs: implement two-generational strategies, increase Early Learning and Early Learning Investments, increase ways of transportation for people in poverty, and allow access to services in rural areas. ([Florida Chamber - Hard Cliffs](#))
    - Two-generational strategies enables family and economic stability that supports short- and long-term outcomes for the entire family, and particularly the children. This is done by focusing on the parents' wellbeing and the children's. ([Florida Chamber - Hard Cliffs](#))
    - Increasing Early Learning is a must. Brookings Institute recently released a report that shows children who participate in Head Start show higher high school graduation rates, and it is especially advantageous for minority students. The benefits of keeping children in a positive environment include that they have higher probabilities of graduating from high school and higher probabilities of going on to post-secondary education. Recent research shows that children in Head Start retain advantages in later school years. ([Florida Chamber - Hard Cliffs](#))
    - Early Learning Investments - Heckman's research shows intervening earlier in a child's life equates to a longer and better return on investment. For states such as Florida, which depends upon 77 percent of its General Revenue, and more than one-fourth of total revenue, from sales and use taxes — it is clear that it's in the best interest of the state to help all Florida children get the best start they can, and get an

- education that will qualify them for jobs in the higher tier of salaries. ([Florida Chamber - Hard Cliffs](#))
- **Transportation** - A serious disruption in transportation leads to less ability for workers to get to their jobs and less ability to access services such as job training. ([Florida Chamber - Hard Cliffs](#))
  - **Access to services** - There is often an issue of access of services in the rural areas. Access is not solely a transportation issue, it is often a logistics issue with offices for programs in many different places with multiple application processes. ([Florida Chamber - Hard Cliffs](#))
- SNAP benefits start at \$24,980 for a 1-person household and increase for every additional person. ([SNAP Benefits](#))
  - The high for enrollment in SNAP benefits was in 2014, which saw more than 3.6 million enrollees in Florida; since then, the enrollment has gone down to just over 3.2 million enrollees in 2017. ([SNAP Recipients in Florida](#))
    - Must find research on why the enrollment has gone down. For instance, are people making more money? Or have the benefits just simply gone down?
      - I cannot find this information, I am going to go on with something different in Child Poverty
  - A family of four, including two children, would be considered below the poverty line in 2017 if their combined income was less than \$24,848. ([Poverty Rates](#))
    - 1 penny above this and benefits are cut.
  - But just because a family is above the poverty line doesn't mean they're able to make ends meet, said Melissa Radey, a professor at Florida State University who specializes in poverty research. ([Poverty Rates](#))
    - Rising healthcare costs, housing costs, and other miscellaneous costs beg the question of if this limit is low enough.
  - The poverty rate actually increased slightly from 2016 to 2017 for single mothers. That group is about four times more likely to live in poverty than married couples with children. ([Poverty Rates](#))
  - And black people statewide are twice as likely to be impoverished as white people. ([Poverty Rates](#))
    - These vulnerable populations are more susceptible to being impoverished, and due to the increase of poverty rates in single mothers, it might be presumed to be because of the way the state doles out benefits.
  - Now, this leaves us with a difficult position to be in; namely, how do we fix this? Is this a single-issue, or single-generation, fix? Can this be helped by reforming JJ and Education?

- Previously filed legislation:

## **Child Welfare Reform**

- **Working title:** Provide assistance to ensure DCF caseworkers are able to be effective (LOGAN)
  - **Problem statement:** *Department of Children and Families caseworkers have inadequate support to manage their numerous cases at once. A typical DCF caseworker can handle upwards of thirty cases at once, which is far too many for them to be handled properly. DCF must increase funding to hire more caseworkers to ensure that affected children do not slip through the cracks.*
  - **Data:**
    - Child-protective investigators have a critical function in the state's child welfare system. However, that job is an entry level position requiring only a bachelor's degree accompanied by a starting salary of \$35,000 as of 2017. A former investigator has said "When you have a caseload of 20-25-30-35, you are bound to not just fail, but the families you are charged with overseeing and helping are going to fail." High caseloads lead to resignations and even is a fact cited in [DCF's annual report](#). Florida considered 15 open cases the maximum any one investigator should be assigned. For every allegation against a caretaker, an investigator must query into these claims and interview people until a conclusion is reached. A case must be completed within 60 days of receiving the case.
    - In Florida's southeast region, including Palm Beach County along with Broward, Martin, St. Lucie, Okeechobee and Indian River, was the third lowest region in the state with an average of 12.2 caseload per worker. Central Florida has an average 11.4 caseload and the southern region (Miami-Dade and Monroe) has an average of 12.1 cases per workload. The highest region was in the Northwest region, the Florida panhandle, with 13.9 average caseload. The second highest average is the Suncoast region, includes gulf coast counties from Collier to Hillsborough had 13.5 case load. Northeast Florida, along the Atlantic Coast from Daytona Beach to Jacksonville, had an average of 12.3 percent ([PDF](#))
    - Law enforcement is not sufficiently trained in recognizing certain occurrences of bodily trauma. This results in dangerously inefficient communication between DCF and law enforcement in regards to the well-being of children under their jurisdiction. This carelessness and even lack of training led to the death of two-year-old Jordan Belliveau following a problem-plagued reunification with his mother. The state investigation found that every level of Pinellas County's foster care system failed because basic practices were just not followed. This is partly due to the privatization of child welfare 20 years ago that led to the large dismantlement of the Community Based Care model through Florida's Department of Children and Families.



- The child welfare system is stymied with long waiting lists that make children suffer. Siblings and families are often separated, which can cause long term damage if a healthy reunification is possible but not the objective. According to the United States' Children's Bureau, there are 443,000 children in foster care. The average age of children entering foster care is 8 years old and one-third are children of color.
- Turnover and hiring freezes can increase workloads due to vacancies. For example, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services estimates that each caseworker who leaves the agency costs \$54,000 due to recruiting and training new personnel ([Caseload Management](#))
  - Texas was also able to decrease caseworker turnover and stabilize its workforce through a multifaceted approach that included changes in leadership, adoption of a new training model, increased funding from the state, enhanced staff training and recognition, and even new safety protocols. In home caseloads have decreased significantly from 16.9 to 11.9. Texas claims it was not one measure that reduced this, but a comprehensive approach ([Texas success](#))
- **Recommendations:** Caseloads are at an overwhelming amount for current DCF caseworkers. The Children's Campaign believes more resources need to be allocated to better support caseworkers so they can adequately do their job.
- **Previously filed legislation:** SB 7018 in 2016 would have required the Department of Children and Families to create an assessment process for children who are removed from their families and placed in out of home care. If passed, the bill also would have required the development of continuum of care to provide certain services to children who have been badly traumatized.
- State success story:
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- **Working Title: The Department of Children and Families must ensure that they are investigating probable claims of sexual abuse in the foster care system (Joey)**  
 Sexual assault in the Child Welfare system is a problem in Florida's foster care system. In 2019 session, there were two bills introduced that would have made foster parents

exempt from public records. Thankfully, these bills did not pass. With allegations of sexual abuse in foster care households, exempting them from the public record is not something that would benefit children in foster care. Laws must be enacted to ensure that DCF is responding to allegations of sexual abuse and not letting any probable case fall through.

○ **Questions:**

- Is there a public database of allegations against foster parents (by number) so that we could find numbers - child database???
- Who investigates allegations of sexual abuse when made by foster kids?
- Is there a possibility that we could look at an age qualifier?
  - Is there an age where there should be a higher level of immediate response = for example under age 10 foster home is closed pending investigation?
- Teachers???
- Any other state(s) doing a good job addressing allegations of sexual abuse in child care?
- What percentage of foster kids are being verified abused? What percentage of foster kids have alleged abuse? (Could be national)
- Is any state addressing sexual abuse allegations in a way that is an immediate response?
- Total number of Florida kids versus the total number of verified abuse and neglect. Percentages should be about equal for kids who are abused in foster care and with regular families
- <https://www.myflfamilies.com/programs/childwelfare/dashboard/abuse-during-services.shtml>
- <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cm2017.pdf> (Page 33 of PDF has interesting table showing percentage of child maltreatment cases in foster care nationally)
- 769 total verified reports, which means that finding 13.85% was the rate of verified reports out of the alleged reports in total in 2018. If we use that number, then we can estimate that there were approximately 5,552 reports of alleged abuse in out-of-home care. Then, if we go back to our dashboard and we look at alleged abuse, and we know our total reports of sexual abuse. 85 verified sexual abuse out of 188 allegations in foster care; 3.39% allegations of maltreatment. This means that 45% of alleged sexual abuse in foster care are *verified*. This does not include not substantiated, which is different than no abuse present.

○ **Data**

- [Reporting Sexual Abuse](#)
  - Florida DCF refers anyone suspecting abuse or neglect of children or vulnerable adults to report the information to the DCF abuse hotline either by phone, fax or online. If the suspected victim was

Commented [1]: high profile cases of allegations of abuse by foster families/parents and failure to remove children until other children have confirmed allegations - foster father that killed himself...

harmful by a caregiver, then DCF investigates the allegations. If the victim was allegedly abused or neglected by someone other than a caregiver, then the allegations are electronically transferred to the appropriate local law enforcement.

- [Mandatory Reporters of Suspected Child Sexual Abuse](#)
  - In addition to professional mandatory reporters, [section 201 of chapter 39 of the 2012 Florida statutes](#) states that “[a]ny person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child’s welfare,” report the information to the Florida DCF abuse hotline.
  - California has far more comprehensive guidelines for mandatory reporting compared to Florida. Texas has less comprehensive guidelines than Florida.
- [Penalties for Failure to Report and False Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect](#)
  - [Section 205 of chapter 39 of the 2012 Florida statutes](#) outlines penalties a person can face for failing to report knowledge of suspected abuse or neglect or for preventing others from doing so.
  - “A person who is required to report known or suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect and who knowingly and willfully fails to do so, or who knowingly and willfully prevents another person from doing so, commits a felony of the third degree.”
  - Anyone convicted for failure to report or filing a false report for malicious intent can face a \$1,500 and face up to five years in detention.
- Data from the Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Statistics and the FBI’s National Incident-Based Reporting System, the Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network estimates out of every 1000 rapes in 2017, only 230 rapes were reported to law enforcement. ([RAINN Statistics](#))
- In 2016, Child Protective Services agencies nationally found evidence for more than 57,000 cases of youth sexual assault.
  - The victims often know the perpetrator. Of sexual abuse cases reported to law enforcement, 93% of juvenile victims knew the perpetrator and 34% of cases are committed by family members.
  - These complex scenarios often create barriers for child victims to report and can cause a varying length of time until a victim is ready to report.
- [Forensic Interviewing of Children: Best Practices](#)
- [Rape and Sexual Assault Reporting Laws](#)
  - The National Center for the Prosecution of Violence Against Women compiled a report of state reporting laws for medical personnel treating competent adults that fall into four categories.

1. Laws that specifically require medical professionals to report treatment of a rape victim to law enforcement
  2. Laws that require the reporting of injuries that may include rape
    - a. Laws that require non-accidental or intentional injuries to be reported
    - b. Laws that require injuries caused by criminal conduct or violence to be reported
  3. Laws relating to other crimes or injuries which may impact rape and sexual assault victims
    - a. These injuries include injuries caused by firearms, stab wounds, burns, etc.
  4. Laws regarding sexual assault forensic examinations which may impact rape and sexual assault reporting
- In this report, California is cited as the only state that requires medical personnel to report treatment of a competent adult rape victim (Cal Pen Code § 11160).
  - Florida Statute § 790.42 falls under the second category of reporting laws as well as the third. Reporting under the third category is only required if a firearm was involved. falls under the fourth category.
  - Tex. Health and Safety Code § 161.041 falls under the third only when a firearm.
  - Both Florida and Texas have laws requiring a rape and/or sexual assault must be reported before a forensic examination will be paid for by the state (F.S.A.S S960.28 and Tex. Code Crim. Proc. art 56.08, respectively) which fall under the fourth category.

■ [Sexual Harassment at School](#)

<https://www.csqmidwest.org/policyresearch/0119-sexual-assault.aspx>

<https://www.fcasy.org/information/sexual-assault-statistics>

○ **Previously filed legislation:**

- Regardless of the age of the victim, sexual battery or assault can no longer be charged after four years. **SB 130** by Senator Stewart (D - Orlando) and **HB 165** by Representative Hattersley (D- Riverview) sought to remove the time limitations on prosecuting sexual battery offenses committed against youth to allow survivors to report offenses when they are ready. SB 130 passed its first committee but then was indefinitely postponed; HB 165 was never heard in a committee.
- **Working Title: Limit Baker Acting of Children to Necessary Cases (Kelly)**  
*The Baker Act, or involuntary examination, has become the new 'school-to-prison pipeline'. Children who do not need to be Baker Acted, especially children with disabilities, are being involuntarily examined at alarming rates. Schools are ill-equipped*

*and untrained in dealing with students with mental health crises or physical disabilities, and resort to Baker Acting. Faculty and staff must be trained in best practice recommendations to help students.*

- **Data:**

- Currently, there is no minimum age in Florida for children to be involuntarily examined (Baker Acted). A minimum age should be established to protect young children from the possible traumas of being involuntarily examined away from the watch of their parents. **Currently, no states with involuntary examination laws have a minimum age for evaluation.**
- According to information provided by the Baker Act Reporting Center, 545 children between the ages of 2 and 5 years old were involuntarily examined from fiscal year 2012/2013 to fiscal year 2016/2017. In the same amount of time, involuntary examinations were performed on 9,651 children between the ages of 6 and 10. That is a total of 10,196 children ages 10 and under Baker Acted in five fiscal years. This number increases for children between the age of 11 - 13 and 14 - 17 with 43,838 and 101,078 in each group undergoing involuntary examinations, respectively. The total number of Florida children Baker Acted in the last five fiscal years in 155,112. ([Florida's Baker Acted Kids](#))
- Increased funding and resources must be funneled towards public schools for mental health services for children. Providing students with intervention services before a crisis occurs may limit the need to involuntarily examine minors.
- Increased training and awareness in schools is necessary so that faculty and staff know how to engage students with mental health and behavioral disorders and to identify when Baker Acting students is indeed necessary.
- Baker Acts in Florida have increased more than 49 percent over the past eight years. Baker Acting (involuntary examination) can be a traumatizing experience for children and teens and should only occur when absolutely necessary.
- In Florida, Baker Acting is replacing the school-to-prison pipeline. Other means of helping children with possible mental illness need to be implemented.
- The number of Baker Acted kids in Florida increased 55% between 2010 and 2017. During the 2016/2017 fiscal year, nearly a quarter (21%) of Baker Acted kids were taken into custody at school.
  - ([Baker Act](#))

- **Previously filed legislation:**

- **Agenda Issue: Improve Community-based Care** (**Amanda**)

- **Data:**

- The Children's Campaign supports child welfare services within the community based care model and questions the debate by some to return

direct care to the Florida Department of Children & Families. Reforms and improvements, however, in the CBC model are warranted. Examples include addressing board governance composition in order to ensure a broad range of knowledgeable stakeholders, diversity and sufficient numbers are involved. The total number of children, and geography overseen must be examined more carefully in order to align with appropriate oversight. Stewardship of public dollars is paramount, including executive compensation in some areas of the state.

- **Previously filed legislation:**

- **Working Title:** *Ensure that the child welfare system is serving the children and families that are in the system and providing foster care* (Joey)

*The state must support adults who help care for children when they are unable to live in their parent's home. Foster parents and relative caregivers often supplement the small stipend the state provides to access child care, purchase new clothes, and other items children need.*

- **Data:**

- Foster parents get paid, per child, on a tier of ages. 0-5 Years: \$457.95. Age 6-12: \$469.68. Years Age 13-21: \$549.74. ([Florida Foster Care Payments](#))
- There is an increasing need for more foster care beds, yet funding for foster care has been decreasing. This means that there will be even less money per foster child. ([Do Better for Florida's Children](#))

- **Previously Filed Legislation:**

- **Working Title:** *Refer Young Dependent Children to Early Steps* (Kelly)

*Requiring DCF to conduct an early needs assessment and to refer vulnerable young children (ages 0-5) who have contact with the child welfare system to the Early Steps program will provide children with critical early intervention services.*

- **Data:**

- Early Steps is Florida's early intervention system that offers services to infants and toddlers who are felt to be at risk for developmental delay like extreme prematurity, severe behavioral disorders, and more. Specialists can include an audiologist, counseling, occupational therapists, and more ([Early Steps Info](#)).
- The Early Steps program increased the number of infants and toddlers referred by 10% in 2015-2016 from the 2013-2014 year. The program in 2015-16 also improved social-emotional skills for 94% of infants and toddlers assessed upon exit. 96% of infants and toddlers assessed upon exit of the program showed improved cognitive skills ([Early Steps Annual Report](#))
- Federal and state funds have increased from FY 2013-2014 through FY 2016-2017 resulting in a total increase of 37 percent. Federal funds have increased by 12 percent from FY 2013-2014 through FY 2016-2017.

Commented [2]: Find current funding, then find where that falls short, then look up recommendations on funding, then look at what other states have done for funding (particularly states that have a better foster care system)

Commented [3]: Research what Early Steps has done and what it still does. Find its funding, maybe try to find some research on shortfalls of Early Steps and ways to remedy them

Recurring state funds have increased by 53 percent from FY 2013-2014 through FY 2016-2017. ([Early Steps Annual Report](#))

- The Early Steps Program is administered by Children's Medical Services in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. It provides infants and toddlers who have a developmental delay, or a condition that places them at risk for developmental delay, with early intervention services and support intended to improve a child's chances to develop to their full potential. In the 2009-10 year, Florida provided these services to more than 44,00 children. The World Health Organization's Commission on the Social Determinants of Health found in 2007 that early identification and treatment of children who are at risk of developmental delay produced economic benefits compared to the costs ([Protect Early Steps](#)). There was a shortfall of over \$12.6 million in 2011-12.
- The 2019 budget provided an increase of \$1.1 million to the Early Steps program from the 2018 budget. ([2500](#))
- **Previously Filed Legislation:**
  - [SB 2500](#) (2019) - Line 529 shows the funding for Early Steps
  - [HB 5001](#) (2018) - Line 531 shows the funding for Early Steps

**Commented [4]:** Go into SB 2500 to see what the funding for Early Steps is this year

## Healthcare Access

- **Working Title:** *Ensure that more kids don't lose medical coverage* ([Kelly](#))  
*Almost 70,000 Florida kids lost access to healthcare in 2018. The number of children covered by Medicaid declined in Florida and many other states for the first time in more than 10 years. Children who do not have access to healthcare fare worse in school and other avenues in life. Ensuring that children have healthcare will allow children to focus on education and other important things.*
  - **Data:**
    - [Nearly 70,000 Florida kids lost Medicaid, KidCare coverage in 2018](#)
    - The number of children covered by Medicaid declined in Florida and many other states for the first time in more than 10 years. At the end of 2018, 828,000 fewer children were enrolled in Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program. About 70% of these losses occurred in Florida and six other states. This includes about 69,000 fewer children in Florida that were enrolled in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) in 2018. Additionally, the rate of uninsured children in Florida rose from 6.6 to 7.3%. This now brings the total to 325,000 children that are uninsured in Florida ([Georgetown Report](#)).
    - Almost a \$22.9 million increase in funding for children's medical services network from 2018-2019
    - Florida Healthy Kids had a \$34 million increase in funding from 2018 to 2019.

**Commented [5]:** Page 50, item 174  
<http://flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2018/2500/BillText/e1/PDF>

**Commented [6]:** Let's try to add more Healthcare stuff that was included in the budget. \*\*\*This will involve looking at SB 2500\*\*\*

**Commented [7]:** Let's look at funding of Healthy Kids, especially

**Commented [8]:** <https://news.wjct.org/post/fewer-florida-children-enrolled-medicaid-chip-2018-report-says>

- Medicaid funding neither decreased nor increased in the 2019 session (confirm this later, but from the numbers it seems that this is the case)
- **Previously filed legislation:**
  - SB 2500 (2019) & HB 5001 (2018)

## **Human Trafficking & Exploitation**

- **Agenda Issue:** Require sex trafficking education in public schools (LOGAN)
- **Problem Statement:** *Florida ranks third in the nation for reports of sex trafficking to the National Human Trafficking Hotline. Requiring sex trafficking education in public schools would allow students to be more aware of who may be trafficked and get them help.*
- **Data:**
  - Florida had 57 reported cases in 2017 of sex trafficking, well above the national average of 12.64 ([Sex trafficking](#)). Minors are especially vulnerable to exploitation. Teaching children to recognize the signs of human trafficking is critical to address the issue in Florida. Nationally, 1 out of every 5 children are at risk of being sexually exploited. In Florida, this means that 552,000 children are at risk.
  - According to data from the National Human Trafficking Hotline, Florida ranks 3rd in the U.S. in human trafficking cases reported by states, behind only California and Texas. Despite laws in place in every state, convictions for human trafficking are rare, in part because victims are unaware of the situation until it's too late. Educating the public and minors in public school will help them become aware of the warning signs to help victims. Many people don't even know they are being trafficked until they are fully isolated from society, and often school age kids are trafficked and have no idea. By increasing education in school, it would help prevent possible victims and help current victims get the services they desperately need ([Florida sex trafficking](#)).
  - In total, sex trafficking programs received a more than \$2 million cut. Despite this legislature and the Attorney General's Office mentioning the growing problem of exploitation in the form of sex trafficking and although the legislature passed policy that was aimed at supporting victims of sex trafficking, successful programs such as Voices for Florida (\$1.15 million reduction) and Camillus House (\$250,000 reduction), saw their funding - which goes toward direct services to victims and coordination of services - cut.
- **Recommendation:** The Florida legislature in the next session must continue to address the plaguing issue of sex trafficking, modern form of slavery. They need to require topics like sex trafficking be included in health education requirements for students to help raise awareness and help educate students on prevention tips.
- **Previously Filed Legislation:**
  - SB 982 & HB 259 (2019) *Human Trafficking Education in Schools/ Comprehensive Health Education (Human Trafficking)*
    - These bills would have required health education in public middle and high schools to include education on the dangers and warning signs of



human trafficking. This would have helped students understand the signs of being trafficked and even to recognize anyone that is trafficked.

- State Success Story:

- **Ohio** has been a forward thinking state regarding human trafficking. They require prevention education training session for professionals like teachers, counselors, and nurses. These trainings include topics like human trafficking ([Ohio human trafficking](#)).

- Red Flags of trafficked youth are included in Ohio's curriculum. They teach possible red flags as listed below ([Ohio AG](#)):
  - The inability to attend school on a regular basis
  - Frequently running away from home
  - Signs of drug addiction
  - Attempt to conceal scars, tattoos, or bruises
- Ohio emphasizes three main objectives for the outreach to the student population. First, they raise general awareness. Second, identification of at-risk youth not identified before. Lastly, they emphasize prevention information like demand reduction and bystander information ([Educating students in Ohio](#))
- Ohio even supplies teachers and educators with a pre and post test for students to ensure they mastered the concepts ([Educating students in Ohio](#)).

- **Working Title: Expand the Open Doors Outreach Network to serve more children (Joey)**

*The Open Doors Outreach Network serves children aged 24 and under who have been or are victims of human or sex trafficking. Expanding this network by allocating additional funding will allow them to serve more children and save more lives.*

- **Data:**

- Voices for Florida's Open Doors Outreach Network received \$750,000 in funding in 2019.
- Voices for Florida's Open Doors Outreach Network enhances service delivery to improve outcomes for survivors of sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, up to age 24.
- The Open Doors Outreach Network is a promising, public-private partnership designed to improve care, coordination and collective impact of services for commercially sexually exploited and trafficked youth. \$2.5 million in general revenue will draw down \$4.5 million in federal funding, allowing expansion to 40 counties.
- A hallmark of the Open Doors' program is the placement of commercially sexually exploited and trafficked victims in the care of a coordinated team of professionals.
  - This team includes highly trained Survivor-Mentors, who are on-call 24/7 to provide immediate crisis intervention, along with day-to-day trauma-based/trauma-informed care management.

- Regional Advocates and Clinicians round out the service team and work in concert with cross-sector stakeholders at the community and state level, including law enforcement.
  - The program is currently available in six Florida regions; **Big Bend** (Leon, Bay, Franklin, Gadsden, Jefferson, Liberty, Madison, Taylor and Wakulla counties), **Central Florida** (Brevard, Orange, Osceola, Polk, Lake and Sumter counties), **Northeast** (Nassau, Duval, St. Johns, Baker and Clay counties), **North Coastal** (Flagler, Volusia and Putnam counties), **Suncoast** (Hillsborough, Manatee, Pinellas, Sarasota, Pasco and Hernando counties), and **Southwest** (Collier, Lee and Charlotte counties).
- **Previously filed legislation:** N/A
- **Working Title:** *Expand funding for organizations that deal with human trafficking* (Joey)
 

*Allocating additional funding for organizations that deal with human and sex trafficking will allow more victims to find help and support. Victims need this help and support in order to have a stable life and more effectively deal with the trauma incurred.*

  - **Data:**
    - In total sex trafficking programs received a more than \$2 million cut. Despite this legislature and the Attorney General's Office mentioning the growing problem of exploitation in the form of sex trafficking and although the legislature passed policy that was aimed at supporting victims of sex trafficking, successful programs such as Voices for Florida (\$1.15 million reduction) and Camillus House (\$250,000 reduction), saw their funding - which goes toward direct services to victims and coordination of services - cut.
  - **Previously filed legislation:**
    - Florida ranks third in the nation for reports of sex trafficking to the National Human Trafficking Hotline. **HB 851** by Representative Fitzenhagen (R - Fort Myers) requires the Department of Legal Affairs to establish a Direct Service Organization to provide assistance, support, and funding to the Statewide Council on Human Trafficking. Sponsored by Senator Book (D - Plantation) in the Senate, this bill attempts to help victims through training; easily accessible information on how to locate services; and increased penalties in places known to be possible trafficking hot spots. Training requirements for restaurants and hotels will help employees recognize signs of human trafficking and get more trafficking victims the services they need.

### **Justice for Girls Movement**

- **Agenda Issue:** Advocate for recurring funding for "Girls Matter" therapeutic model serving female youth, instead of the anxiousness of having to request funding each year (LOGAN)

- **Problem Statement:** Funding for Girls Matter: Continuity of care is at the mercy of appropriations bills each legislative session, always leaving the possibility open that enough funding will not be allocated to the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center.
- **Data:**
  - Girls Matter intervenes early in girls lives to improve school success and stop their suspension from school. The Girls Matters program also provides girl centered counseling family counseling, as well as comprehensive care management. These services set therapeutic goals and young women. These programs were created by the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center in 2013 because there were few treatment options available, fragmented community response, and lack of continuity care for girls transitioning from one part of the juvenile justice system to another. The Policy Center partners with girls to co-create programs designed to meet each individual's needs These services are targeted toward those who are at risk of juvenile justice involvement, on probation, in detention, in residential placement, or transition back to the community. ([Girls Matter](#))
  - This model improves access to therapeutic services and advocacy within a continuity of care for high risk girls already facing criminal justice involvement. If expanded it could solve problems in communities served by Allegany Franciscan Ministries.
  - Girls Matter intervenes early in girls lives to improve school success and stop their suspension from school. The Girls Matters program also provides girl centered counseling family counseling, as well as comprehensive care management. These services set therapeutic goals and young women. These programs were created by the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center in 2013 because there were few treatment options available, fragmented community response, and lack of continuity care for girls transitioning from one part of the juvenile justice system to another. The Policy Center partners with girls to co-create programs designed to meet each individual's needs These services are targeted toward those who are at risk of juvenile justice involvement, on probation, in detention, in residential placement, or transition back to the community. ([Girls Matter](#))
- **Recommendation:**
  - Funding needs to be allocated on a recurring basis to the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center to ensure that vulnerable populations of young females will continue to have access to these great programs.
- **Previously filed legislation:**
  - HB 4575 is an Appropriations project by Representative Byrd. It sought a \$375,000 non-recurring sum appropriated to the Department of Juvenile Justice to fund the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center - Girls Matter: Continuity of care. This is important funding for programs that help girls,

the Children's Campaign believes the legislature should pass legislation that allocates recurring funding for this program.

- **Agenda Issue:** Bringing an end to the unfair and disparate treatment of girls and young women in Florida's juvenile justice system (LOGAN)
  - **Problem Statement:** While the overall number of incarcerated youth is falling, the rate of arrests and imprisonment for girls is declining at a significantly slower rate. Girls are more likely to be locked up for minor offenses or technical violations of probation. Girls of color are particularly vulnerable to having charges brought against them. We need to bring an end to the disparate treatment of girls in the juvenile justice system.
  - **Data:**
    - In state prisons across the country, there are 48,043 youth in residential placement. However, 15% are girls. Additionally, African American girls are more likely to be incarcerated than white girls. The placement rate for all girls is 47 per 100,000 girls between the ages of 12 and 17. For white girls, the rate is 32 per 100,000 and Native American girls the rate is 134 per 100,000. The staggering fact is that for African American girls, the rate is more than double the placement rate for all girls at 110 per 100,000 ([Incarcerated Women and Girls](#)).
    - While the overall number of incarcerated youth is falling, the rate of arrest and imprisonment for girls is declining at a significantly slower rate. Girls are more likely to be locked up for minor offenses or technical violations (e.g. violating conditions of probation not a new law violation). Girls of color are particularly vulnerable to having charges brought against them. Pathways into professions are also blocked more frequently for girls with juvenile records than are boys. This leads to repeating the cycle of poverty.
    - This even intersects racial and ethnicity backgrounds with Black and American Indian youth overrepresented in correctional facilities. However, at the same time, white youth are underrepresented. Just 14% of all youth under 18 in the United States are Black, 43% of boys and 34% of girls in these facilities are Black (Youth Confinement). The majority of girls, as compared to a smaller proportion of boys, were "charged under the loose heading of immortality." Also, higher percentages of girls are sent to reformatories compared to boys, and lower percentages of girls are placed in probation. Moreover, arrests for girls have increased at a faster rate than for boys. Over the past 30 years, girls are more likely to be referred to juvenile court for delinquency offenses compared to their male counterparts. This then results in girls more likely than boys to be formally processed, detained, and sentenced to incarceration.
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girls, the rate is 32 per 100,000 and Native American girls the rate is 134 per 100,000. The staggering fact is that for African American girls, the rate is more than double the placement rate for all girls at 110 per 100,000 (Incarcerated Women and Girls).

- Sadly, 4% of the world's female population lives in the US, but the US accounts for 30% of the world's incarcerated women (States of Women's Incarceration: The Global Context 2018).

- **Recommendations:**

- Sadly, 4% of the world's female population lives in the US, but the US accounts for 30% of the world's incarcerated women ([States of Women's Incarceration: The Global Context 2018](#)). The fact that girls account for one quarter of all juvenile arrests need to be changed ([Patterns and Trends in Juvenile Crime and Juvenile Justice](#)). Girls are treated differently in the criminal justice system at astonishing rates and this much change.

- **Previously Filed Legislation:**

- No legislation in the state of Florida has been filed or passed in an attempt to mitigate this growing problem. However, SB 49 titled "[Dignity for Incarcerated Women Act](#)" was passed this legislative session. The bill requires incarcerated women be provided with some key health care and hygiene products for free. The bill also sets new requirements for male correctional employees. This is a great first step to provide a more equitable treatment for women and girls that are incarcerated, but much more needs to be done in order to help reduce the growing youth incarceration of female youth.

## Juvenile Justice

- **Working Title: Florida must increase its utilization of civil citation and other diversion methods, and expunge juvenile records for certain crimes (Joey)**  
*Florida must increase its utilization of civil citation. Data shows that when civil citation is utilized, the rate of recidivism decreases significantly. Offering children an alternative to an arrest and expunging certain crimes from juvenile records will prevent them from being barred from employment in the future. Florida must enact legislation that will make it easier for juveniles to arrest certain crimes so that they have a second chance in the future.*

- **Data:**

- Most adolescents who are arrested for violating the law will not be arrested for a second offense or become repeat offenders in adulthood. Diversion expungement programs for juveniles are proven to help kids who commit minor offenses get back on the right path by offering them an avenue out of the criminal justice system. However, the process for expungement in these programs is not universal in Florida and is sparse at best. For example, low participation rates in counties like Hillsborough leads to thousands of teens being denied the chance to avoid a criminal

record due to a mistake as a minor. Diversion programs allow juveniles who are caught in low-level, nonviolent offenses to pay a civil citation, perform community service, receive counseling, or a combination of those things instead of arrest and prosecution. These programs have numerous benefits like taxpayer savings due to less people in the prison system and even reduced recidivism rates due to helping explain the harm of their actions. The benefits cannot be stressed enough, but the problem is that not enough jurisdictions in Florida have diversion programs that allow minors to avoid a permanent mark on their record- which can be an obstacle to employment, education, and even housing. Pinellas county deputies have a choice to arrest a teen or have the child go through a diversion program. This “discretion” could lead to more minorities and children of color being arrested at higher rates than their white counterparts due to implicit bias.

- 60 Florida counties have implemented civil citations, but 7 have not. Those counties who do not yet have civil citation programs; Washington, Calhoun, Gulf, Taylor, Dixie, Bradford, and Hardee. ([Map of Civil Citation Usage](#))
- In April 2019, only 58% of eligible youth were issued civil citations or other alternatives to arrest ([Civil Citation Dashboard](#))
- From May 2018 - April 2019, the percentage of children issued an alternative to arrest was 63%. ([Civil Citation Dashboard](#))
  - 45 counties are below the statewide average of 63% issuance of civil citation, while 22 counties are at or above the state average.
    - When this data was last taken in October 2018, 39 counties were below the statewide average of 62%, whereas 28 were at or above the average.
- There are six counties that have a 0% rate of issuance. Those counties are Taylor, Bradford, Dixie, Franklin, Gilchrist, and Gulf.
  - Other counties with remarkably low issuance rates are: Walton (9%), Sumter (8%), Okaloosa (13%), Madison (5%), Levy (10%), Gadsden (14%), Glades (17%), Hardee (2%), Highlands (13%), Holmes (22%), Union (17%), Osceola (25%), Liberty (25%), Baker (22%), and Columbia (30%).
- Pinellas has the highest issuance percentage at 97%.
- The average recidivism for civil citation programs in the state is 4%. The highest being 19% and the lowest 0%. ([Civil Citation 2016-17](#)) This is in stark contrast to the 35-67% recidivism rate for arrested youth. ([Florida Policy Institute](#))
- Around 1 million young people were arrested in the US in 2014. This creates a record of all actions and process. A juvenile record includes all documents held by the police, courts, and district attorneys for any criminal matter of anyone that is under 18 and involved ([Expungement vs. Seclusion](#)).

- Sealing a record means closing records to the public, while keeping keep accessible to a limited number of law enforcement personnel. On the other hand, expungement involved completely destroying a juvenile's record. An expungement is treated as if it never happened ([Expungement vs. Seclusion](#)).
- **Previously filed legislation:**
  - Youthful misdeeds can impact children throughout their life if they are not given an opportunity to remove these issues from the public record once they have completed their repayment to society. Two bills, **SB 966 (2019)** by Senator Perry (R - Gainesville) and **HB 6065 (2019)** by Representative Altman (R - Indian Harbour Beach), would have allowed minors who completed a diversion program for a felony offense to expunge their nonjudicial arrest charges from public record. The Senate version passed the Criminal Justice committee before dying in Judiciary; the House version never had a vote.
- **Working Title: *Ban the use of solitary confinement on minors* (Joey)**

*Solitary confinement can cause extreme psychological, physical, and developmental harm according to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). The risks are intensified for children who are still developing and vulnerable to significant harm, especially kids with disabilities or histories of trauma and abuse. Possible negative effects of solitary confinement are: visual/auditory hallucinations, hypersensitivity to noise and touch, insomnia, paranoia, increased risk of suicide, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Banning this practice on children will help children rehabilitate instead of causing harm that will persist throughout their lives.*

  - **Data:**
    - Solitary confinement can cause extreme psychological, physical, and developmental harm according to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). The risks are intensified for children who are still developing and vulnerable to significant harm, especially kids with disabilities or histories of trauma and abuse. Possible negative effects of solitary confinement are: visual/auditory hallucinations, hypersensitivity to noise and touch, insomnia, paranoia, increased risk of suicide, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.
    - In order to keep youth safe in adult facilities when they are sent to adult court, they are often placed in isolation or solitary confinement. These conditions can cause anxiety and paranoia, and can exacerbate existing mental health issues, putting youth at risk of suicide. In a national study, youth housed in adult jails are 36 times more likely to commit suicide than youth housed in juvenile detention facilities. ([Jailing Juveniles](#))
    - Studies suggest that [youth of color](#), [LGBTQ youth](#), gender-non-conforming youth, and [youth with disabilities](#) are more likely to be placed in solitary confinement — which administrators sometimes justify as

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necessary “for their own protection,” or because the facility lacks appropriate services or accommodations. ([Juvenile Law Center](#))

- **Previously filed legislation:**

- Solitary confinement can cause extreme psychological, physical, and developmental harm, especially to children. **SB 624** and **HB 755 (2019)**, introduced respectively by Senator Montford (D - Quincy) and Representative Alexander (D - Tallahassee), sought to prohibit youth younger than 19 in juvenile detention centers or correctional facilities from being placed in solitary confinement. The House version was never heard in committee, while the Senate version failed in the Appropriations committee after passing two other committees.

## **Mental Health & Substance Abuse**

- **Working Title:** **Allocate more funding towards mental health efforts for children (Kelly)**

*Mental health funding is extraordinarily low in Florida. Children do not get the help they need, and as a consequence our most vulnerable children never recover from their illness. Children with untreated mental health illnesses on average do worse in school and exhibit more negative behaviors. Mental health funding must be increased so that children are able to receive the support and help they need to recover.*

- **Half of Florida Kids Don't Get Needed Mental Health Services**

- **Data:**

- One big problem area in Florida is mental health. This article shows that half of Florida's kids do not receive mental health treatment when they need it. Behavioral and mental health problems should be a top priority of lawmakers, especially with the recent rise in school shootings which are typically characterized by mental health or behavioral health problems. Additionally, mental health problems lead to worsened school performance and educational attainment, and the problem cannot be ameliorated without an increase in school counselors or easier access to mental health treatment. Furthermore, poverty can exacerbate the effects of mental health issues because it is more difficult for people who are in poverty to seek and receive the treatment they need. Worsened school performance and educational attainment then leads to a negative feedback loop of poverty, which cannot be helped without easier, more streamlined access to mental health care.
- The latest report from Mental Health American reveals that Florida has an estimated 594,000 uninsured individuals with mental health issues. Florida ranked last in the nation in its per capita

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mental health support as of 2014, the most recent data. Florida invested \$36.05 per capita, versus the U.S. average of \$125.90.

- The number of inmates with mental illness or substance abuse disorder increase by 9,000 in 2010 and it is projected to be 35,000 by 2020 ([Florida Policy Institute](#))
- Investigative Reporter Katie LaGrone found reports of mental or behavioral issues among Florida students is up 55% as of last year, according to the Florida Department of Education. However, the state only added four residential treatment beds since 2013. As of July, Florida had 526 residential treatment beds for children, despite the high demand for mental health services for kids
  - 1 in 5 children have a mental, emotional or behavioral disorder in a given year
  - Last year, 25,420 Florida students reported having mental/behavioral issue.
  - 32,763 youth under the age of 18 were involuntarily committed under the Baker Act last year
  - ([Florida Mental Health](#))

■ **Previously filed legislation:**

- SB 818 by Senator Book
  - Titled Mental Health, the bill makes changes to the Baker Act and Marchman act that expands the criteria to provide additional services to more people. The bill allows respondents under both programs to be held for up to 10 days (Increased from 5), before a hearing. It also allows people treated on an involuntary basis under the Marchman Act to be held in a treatment facility for a longer period of time following a hearing on an involuntary assessment position.
  - This unfortunately did not pass last session.
- HB 23 by Representative Yarborough
  - Titled Telehealth, established standards of practice for telehealth providers and authorizes certain telehealth providers to use telehealth to prescribe certain controlled substances under specified circumstances. Lastly, the bill provides registration requirements for out-of-state telehealth providers. This bill establishes guidelines for telehealth and telemedicine, allowing providers to collaborate in reimbursement. It also allows healthcare providers in other states to use telemedicine to treat Florida residents after they register with the state ([Florida Telehealth Law](#)).
  - Florida's First Lady Casey DeSantis announced current plans to create a telemental health network so that 35,000

students in the panhandle will have on-demand access to virtual care when they return to school this fall. This will include the five counties in the panhandle that was impacted the most by the Category 5 storm last year.

- The five-county region in the northwest part of the state was hard hit by the Category 5 storm in 2018.
- Around 40% of the healthcare providers in the area have lost employees since the storm, adding stress to the already existing provider shortage.
- Officials fear many of those children aren't getting the care they need because their parents can't find providers, or the children have stopped going to scheduled appointments with summer at hand. This new program would give those children access to care at school through a telemedicine platform tied to an available provider network.

- **Agenda Issue: Combating the opioid crisis' impact on children (Kelly)**

*The national opioid crisis is affecting children in two ways. One way is that parents who are addicted to opioids are unable to care for their children in a way that is effective, often leading to child abuse and neglect. The second way is if children themselves get their hands on opioids. Abusing this drug leads to severe impairment and has a negative effect on their mental and physical health. Stricter legislation must be enacted to combat the opioid crisis without criminalizing those who are addicted.*

- **Data:**

- Florida's death rate from opioid overdose exceeds the national average by nearly 2 deaths at 16.3 per 100,000 persons. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) figures, prescription opioid deaths in the state increased by nearly 400 over a three-year period. From 2012 to 2017, the death rate from heroin in Florida rose from 101 to 107, according to NIDA ([Drug Abuse](#)). It appears neither opioid or heroin abuse in Florida is going away any time soon, despite growing awareness and the federal spotlight on opioids particularly. In the case of opioids, prescriptions lie at the center of much of their abuse. Per 100 people, the prescription rate for opioids in Florida exceeds the national average by 2 percent. In Florida, the ages most affected by heroin use range from 18 to 29.
- Over the past three years, the state has removed children from addicted parents in more than 4,000 cases in our area. Almost half of those cases were reported in Broward County.
- "Right now, we have more children between birth and five in shelters and in group care than we've ever had and that may very well be a function of opioids," said Larry Rein, the Executive Director of ChildNet.

- **Previously filed legislation:**

- HB 451

**Commented [11]:** What is Florida doing to combat this? What are other states doing? We already have a good amount of numbers, let's confirm those numbers and find the sources of them and link them here. What about high schoolers who are using opioids? Can we find stats on that?

- Requires the Department of Health to create a pamphlet discussing opioid alternatives and require doctors to give the pamphlet to patients before prescribing opioids.
- These pamphlets include information on non opioid alternatives for the treatment of pain, including non opioid medicinal drugs and nonpharmacological therapies. It must also include the advantages and disadvantages of the use of non opioid alternatives
- Passed and signed by the governor
- [Opioid law](#)
- HB 1253
  - This bill gives the Florida Attorney General access to information in the state's prescription drug database to track the sales of opioids.
  - This will help the AG's effort to sue drug manufacturers and pharmacies for overselling pain pills. However, patient information will be protected.
  - This Prescription Drug Monitoring Program authorizes the AG to introduce as evidence in certain action specified information from prescription drug monitoring program. It also authorizes the AG to have access to records for active investigations or pending civil or criminal cases
- HB 21 in 2018
  - The Controlled Substances Act requires practitioners to complete specified board-approved continuing education courses to prescribe controlled substances. It also defines "acute pain" as "the normal, predicted, physiological, and time-limited response to an adverse chemical, thermal, or mechanical stimulus associated with surgery, or trauma. The term does not include pain related to: Cancer or a terminal condition. This bill also provides for adoption of standards of practice for treatment of acute pain; limits prescribing of opioids for acute pain to three days. It also requires pain management clinic owners to register approved exemptions with DOH, provides requirements for pharmacists & practitioners for dispensing of controlled substances to persons not known to them; conforms state controlled substances schedule to federal controlled substances schedule and revises requirements for prescription drug monitoring program

## **Protection of LGBTQ Youth**

- **Agenda Issue: Ban Conversion Therapy Against LGBTQ Youth (LOGAN)**
  - **Problem Statement:**

- *Conversion therapy is a dangerous, ineffective practice that leads to poor health outcomes, and even death for LGBTQ youth. A newly published study found that 1 in 5 of all LGBTQ youth attempted suicide in the past year, while nearly 1 in 3 transgender youth did in the past year ([suicide risk](#)). LGBTQ youth who have experienced conversion therapy were twice as likely to attempt suicide than those who did not undergo this conversion. Conversion therapy is still legal in Florida and 31 other states, despite many medical groups and studies describing just how dangerous and ineffective the practice really is ([suicide risk](#)).*
- Data:
  - A 2017 Gravis Marketing poll found that 71% of Floridians believe conversion therapy on youth should be banned. ([Williams Institute at the UCLA College of Law](#)).
  - According to the American Psychological Association, **the largest scientific and professional organization of psychologists in the United States**, conversion therapy ignores best clinical practices and abandons professional ethics and violates practice guidelines by not providing treatment in the least-restrictive setting possible, by not protecting client autonomy, and by ignoring current scientific information on sexual orientation. ([American Psychological Association](#))
  - Areas of Florida prohibiting conversion therapy:
    - Alachua County ([County OKs conversion-therapy ban](#))
    - Bay Harbor Islands
    - Boca Raton
    - Boynton Beach
    - Broward County
    - El Portal
    - Delray Beach
    - Gainesville
    - Greenacres
    - Key West
    - Lake Worth
    - Miami
    - Miami Beach
    - North Bay Village
    - Oakland Park
    - Palm Beach County
    - \*\*Tampa
      - As of February, a federal judge ruled that Tampa must allow some parts of conversion therapy to continue, despite a city ordinance adopted in 2017 that bans it. The judge issues a limited injunction against the ordinance, keeping in place the ban on electric shock therapy, but

concluding that verbal “counseling” is protected by the First Amendment ([Tampa Conversion Therapy](#))

- Riviera Beach
  - Wellington
  - West Palm Beach
  - Wilton Manors
  - Proposed: Sarasota, St. Petersburg
- Despite Central Florida (specifically Orlando) often having a gay friendly atmosphere, its political leaders have remained silent on any action to ban conversion therapy. Even after the Pulse Nightclub Shooting in 2016 that targeted those in the LGBTQ community.
- Additional Data:
- Several medical associations including, but not limited to, the American Medical Association, American Psychological Association and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry have condemned conversion therapy as a harmful practice that can lead to depression, anxiety, and suicidality. While providing conversion therapy to minors is currently banned in 18 states, there is no statewide ban in Florida ([18 states](#)). Every year there are children who are subjected to this harmful practice, which can lead to numerous mental health complications in their future. LGBTQ youth contemplate suicide at three times the rate of heterosexual youth and have a 120% higher risk of homelessness than their heterosexual or cisgender counterparts.
  - More than half of the 698,000 LGBTQ adults (ages 18-59) in the U.S. who have undergone conversion therapy were teens when the practice was performed. ([Williams Institute at the UCLA College of Law](#))
  - A 2017 Gravis Marketing poll found that 71% of Floridians believe conversion therapy on youth should be banned. ([Williams Institute at the UCLA College of Law](#)).
  - An estimated 20,000 LGBTQ youth will receive conversion therapy from licensed health care professionals before the age of 18 in the 41 states which have not banned conversion therapy, and an additional estimated 57,000 LGBTQ youth will receive conversion therapy from religious or spiritual advisors before the age of 18 across all states ([Williams Institute at the UCLA College of Law](#)).
  - 57% of youth who have undergone conversion therapy report a suicide attempt in the last twelve months. Also, 1 in 3 LGBTQ+ Youth “Seriously Considered” Suicide in the Past Year ([LGBTQ Youth](#))
  - According to the American Psychological Association, **the largest scientific and professional organization of psychologists in**

**the United States**, conversion therapy ignores best clinical practices and abandons professional ethics and violates practice guidelines by not providing treatment in the least-restrictive setting possible, by not protecting client autonomy, and by ignoring current scientific information on sexual orientation. ([American Psychological Association](#))

- Techniques therapists have used to try to change sexual orientation and gender identity include: inducing nausea, vomiting, paralysis, electric shocks, using shame to create aversion to same-sex attractions, orgasmic reconditioning, and satiation therapy. These practices present negative side effects including loss of sexual feeling, depression, suicidality, and anxiety. ([American Psychological Association](#))
- According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, "Therapy directed specifically at changing sexual orientation is contraindicated, since it can provoke guilt and anxiety while having little or no potential for achieving changes in orientation." ([American Academy of Pediatrics](#))
- Most well-respected groups dealing with mental health, health, and children have denounced the practice of conversion therapy. These include: American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, American College of Physicians, American Counseling Association, American Medical Association, American Psychiatric Association, American Psychoanalytic Association, American Psychological Association, American School Counselor Association, American School Health Association, National Association of Social Workers, Pan American Health Organization: Regional Office of the World Health Organization, and Just the Facts Coalition ([Human Rights Campaign](#))
- Despite Central Florida (specifically Orlando) often having a gay friendly atmosphere, its political leaders have remained silent on any action to ban conversion therapy. Even after the Pulse Nightclub Shooting in 2016 that targeted those in the LGBTQ community.
- **Recommendations:** While several Florida cities and counties have already taken initiative to ban conversion therapy, state leadership is needed to protect children by implementing a statewide ban. Conversion therapy must be banned to protect LGBTQ children from unnecessary stress and mental hardship.
- **Previously filed legislation:** *SB 84 & HB 109 (2019) - Conversion Therapy (LGBTQ)*
  - These bills would have banned the dangerous practice of Conversion Therapy on minors under the age of 18. These bills defined what

- conversion therapy is and banned Licensed Health Care Practitioners from practicing it. This was the 5th year this bill has been filed and failed to be scheduled in the Florida Legislature.
- State Success Stories: Currently, 18 states have banned conversion therapy in the US.

## **Services for Disabled Children**

- **Working Title: Ban Seclusion and Reduce Physical Restraint on Children with Disabilities (Kelly)**
  - *Seclusion and physical restraint utilized on children with disabilities greatly harms them. These methods are used in schools when teachers do not know how to deal with students with disabilities, and it is used mostly from PreK-3rd grade. Teachers must be better trained to deal with students with disabilities instead of instantly using seclusion and physical restraint. Legislators must pass legislation aimed to teach teachers how to properly deal with these sorts of situations.*
    - **Data:**
      - Despite the potential of significant harm, restraints and seclusion in schools settings are often used as punishments for inappropriate behavior.
      - A physical restraint is any methods to restrict another person's freedom of movement, physical activity, or normal access to their body. It is a way to control someone's movement, reconstituting behavioral control, and establishing and maintaining safety of others ([Physical Restraint and Seclusion](#))
      - Seclusion is defined by the involuntary confinement of a child alone in a room, where they are prevented from leaving. Seclusion is often associated with physical restraint in that physical restraints is often used to transport a child to a seclusion environment ([Physical Restraint and Seclusion](#)).
      - There is no conclusive evidence that using restraint or seclusion is effective in reducing behavioral problems in students with disabilities, according to the US Department of Health. However, research does show that inappropriate restraint and seclusion may cause physical harm and significant psychological trauma to the child.
      - In the 2017-18 school year, there were 8,367 documented incidents of restraints. This is a whopping increase of 1,000 cases from the prior year in Florida alone.
      - Nearly 50% of the restraints were used on very young children in grades Pre-K - 3rd grade.
    - **Previously Filed Legislation:**

- *SB 62 & HB 349 (2019) - Students with Disabilities in Public Schools (Students with disabilities)*
  - These bills would have banned the use of seclusion or restraint on students unless it was absolutely necessary in the case of harm to the student or harm to others. Different types of restraint were also identified, which could potentially throw a wrench in further efforts if they do not include those definitions.

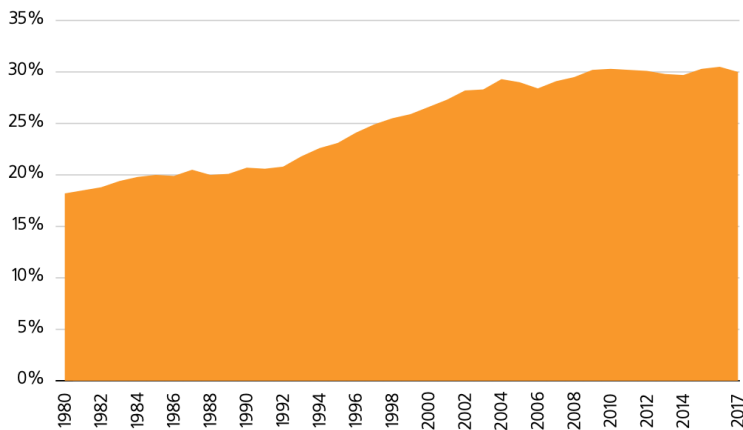
Communication issues

- [Graphic on increase in incarcerated women and girls](#)

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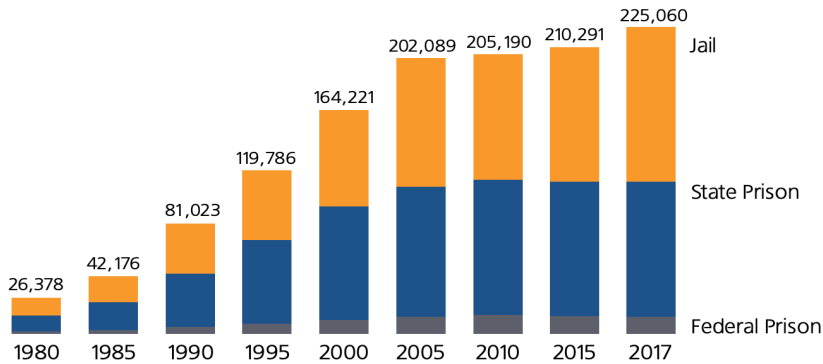


### Girls Comprise a Growing Proportion of All Teen Arrests, 1980-2017



Source: OJJDP Statistical Briefing Book. Online. Available: [http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/crime/JAR\\_Display.asp?ID=qa05230&selOffenses=1](http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/crime/JAR_Display.asp?ID=qa05230&selOffenses=1). October 22, 2018.

### Rise in Women's Incarceration, 1980-2017



Sources: Bureau of Justice Statistics: *Historical Corrections Statistics in the United States, 1850-1984*; *Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear Series* (1997-2017); *Prisoners Series* (1986-2018). Washington, DC.

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**Bullying**

- **Working Title: Expand policies in schools and the Department of Education to include groups disproportionately affected by bullying in its definition of bullying, and allow children to anonymously report instances of bullying (Joey)**

*Bullying has a negative impact on youth. Bullying can lead to mental illness, self-harm, lower grades, and lower success later in life. The definition that Florida uses to define bullying is insufficient, and must be changed to be more inclusive of groups that are susceptible to increased rates of bullying, such as LGBTQ+, minorities, and students with disabilities. Reporting must also be changed to allow students to anonymously report instances of bullying without having to face an administrator. Furthermore, faculty must respond and act accordingly to these bullying reports to ensure that children who are getting bullied get the help and support they need.*

- **Data:**

- <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/guiding-principles.pdf> - Read this when I come back in
- In 2011, approximately 256,600 Florida public high school students (33.0%) experienced some form of bullying, teasing, or name calling. ([Title V Needs Assessment](#))
- Florida hits every benchmark for bullying except for protections for protected/specific groups. ([Laws and Regulations by State](#))
  - Protected groups protections: Explains that bullying may include, but is not limited to, acts based on actual or perceived characteristics of students who have historically been targets of bullying and provides examples of such characteristics. ([Bullying Key Components](#))
- Florida does not include protections for specific groups, and instead treats every group the same regarding bullying. ([Florida Bullying Laws](#))
  - This is interesting and worth researching. Is it better to include protections for specific groups, such as LGBTQ, minorities, etc.?
  - New York anti-bullying laws prohibit acts of harassment and bullying that include, but are not limited to, acts based on a person's actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex. ([New York Bullying Laws](#))
    - Specification could actually solidify the definition of bullying. There is a worry that the definition of bullying is too broad, so specifying it could mean that things that were previously not considered bullying could be now.
- Regarding bullying reports to the DOE from private schools:
  - (h) It is the intent of the Legislature not to regulate, control, approve, or accredit private educational institutions, but to create a database where current information may be obtained relative to the educational institutions in this state coming within the provisions of this section as a service to the public, to governmental agencies, and to other interested parties. It is not the intent of the Legislature to regulate, control, or monitor, expressly or implicitly, churches, their

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ministries, or religious instruction, freedoms, or rites. It is the intent of the Legislature that the annual submission of the database survey by a school shall not be used by that school to imply approval or accreditation by the Department of Education. ([1002.42](#))

- The most important part of this entire statute is the part that states “It is the intent of the Legislature that the annual submission of the database survey by a school shall not be used by that school to imply approval or accreditation by the Department of Education.” Private schools are technically not government entities like public schools are, and so they do not have to abide by due process like public schools do. Additionally, their bullying reports could differ due to if they are religious or not. For instance, one who identifies as LGBTQ could be seen as bullying other students at a religious high school simply because they identify as LGBTQ.

- Florida school districts must adopt a policy prohibiting bullying and harassment of a student or employee of a public K-12 institution. District policies must be in substantial conformity with the Department of Education’s model policy and must contain key policy and procedural elements, including, but not limited to:
  - Statements prohibiting bullying and harassment;
  - Definitions of prohibited behavior;
  - Descriptions of the type of behavior expected from students and employees;
  - Statements of the consequences for a student or employee who commits an act of bullying or harassment;
  - Procedures for reporting and investigations;
  - Procedures for parent notification and notification to all local agencies where criminal charges may be pursued;
  - Procedures for referring victims and perpetrators for counseling and regularly reporting to a victim’s parents any actions taken to protect the victim;
  - Statements of how the policy will be publicized within the district.
- Florida state law requires districts to review the policy at least once every three years. Districts must also establish a procedure for including incidents of bullying and harassment in school safety and discipline reporting. ([Florida Bullying Laws](#))
  - Even though Florida requires all of this, they do not require districts to provide online reporting. This forces students to report bullying in-person. It should be required of all districts to create an online reporting system. There should also be options to create an anonymous report. Furthermore, districts should be required to act on these reports, not just allow them to come in without taking action.
- **There are, generally, two key aspects of bullying we can improve upon in Florida: Reporting and Acknowledgment. We must increase**

students' abilities to report bullying anonymously and online. This will most likely bring the bullying reports up to its truer levels. Moreover, administrators must act on these anonymous and online reports, as they are useless without action. Secondly, we must acknowledge specific groups in our statutes. LGBTQ, different races, nationalities, and cultures are all affected by bullying in different ways, and bullies can target these groups in particular. With our current definition of bullying, these groups may fall out of the scope of what is considered bullying, which could lower numbers of bullying when in fact the numbers are higher.

- Previously filed legislation:

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