

Topic: Family Empowerment Scholarship
Bill Number(s): SB 2524

- Entire Bill(s)
 Partial Bill(s) SB 2524, Section 1

Sponsor(s): Appropriations Committee

Effective Date: July 1, 2022

Month/Year Effect Begins: July/2022

Date of Analysis: February 23, 2022

Section 1: Highlights of Effects on FEFP FTE and COFTE Enrollment Forecasts

A) Current Law:

Section 1002.394, F.S., "The Family Empowerment Scholarship" reads as follows:

(12) SCHOLARSHIP FUNDING AND PAYMENT...

(b)1. Scholarships for students determined eligible pursuant to paragraph (3)(b) are established for up to 20,000 students annually beginning in the 2021-2022 school year. Beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, the maximum number of students participating in the scholarship program under this section shall annually increase by 1.0 percent of the state's total exceptional student education full-time equivalent student enrollment, not including gifted students. An eligible student who meets any of the following requirements shall be excluded from the maximum number of students if the student:

a. Received specialized instructional services under the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program pursuant to s. 1002.66 during the previous school year and the student has a current IEP developed by the local school board in accordance with rules of the State Board of Education;
b. Is a dependent child of a member of the United States Armed Forces, a foster child, or an adopted child;

c. Spent the prior school year in attendance at a Florida public school or the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind. For purposes of this subparagraph, the term "prior school year in attendance" means that the student was enrolled and reported by:

(I) A school district for funding during either the preceding October or February Florida Education Finance Program surveys in kindergarten through grade 12, which includes time spent in a Department of Juvenile Justice commitment program if funded under the Florida Education Finance Program;

(II) The Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind during the preceding October or February student membership surveys in kindergarten through grade 12;

(III) A school district for funding during the preceding October or February Florida Education Finance Program surveys, was at least 4 years of age when enrolled and reported, and was eligible for services under s. 1003.21(1)(e); or

(IV) Received a John M. McKay Scholarship for Students with Disabilities in the 2021-2022 school year.

B) Change(s):

SB 2524 adjusts the maximum number of students to be 26,500 in 2022-23, instead of the original calculation of 20,000 plus 1.0 percent of the state’s total exceptional student education FTE, not including gifted students. Under existing law, this calculation would have produced 24,531.

Section 2: Analysis of Effects on FEFP FTE and COFTE Enrollment Forecasts

C) Data Sources

- 2021-22 FEFP Third Calculation FES-UA FTE, DOE
- 2021-22 FES-UA Waitlist, DOE
- 2021-22 FES-UA Siblings in the FES-EO Program, Step Up for Students (SUFS)
- FTE Forecast (Education Estimating Conference, PreK-12 Enrollment, February 23, 2022)

D) Assumptions

- FES-UA maximum program size calculation is based on the most recent prior year FEFP FTE
- The FES-UA program will reach the cap in all years of the forecast horizon
- Increased participation in FES-UA will result in upward pressure on Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options (FES-EO) for eligible siblings

E) Data and Analysis

The FES-UA program was established during the 2021 session, replacing the Gardiner Scholarship program and, beginning in 2022-23, the McKay Scholarship program as well. The FES-UA program combines the eligibility criteria from both the Gardiner Scholarship and McKay Scholarship programs. In 2021-22 the FES-UA program had a maximum program size of 20,000 students. Participants who meet certain requirements (as seen in Section 1a) are excluded from the maximum number of students, or cap.

The FES-UA program received a significant amount of interest in the 2021-22 school year, effectively reaching its capped number of awards which resulted in a significant waitlist (Table 1).

Table 1. 2021-22 FES-UA Program Participation and Waitlist

	2021-22
Students Subject to Cap	19,954
Students Excluded from Cap	4,782
Waitlist	5,360

Source: DOE, February 2022

The FES-UA program cap is currently forecasted to increase to 24,531 students in 2022-23. This calculation increases the 20,000 maximum program size by 1.0 percent of the most recent prior year exceptional student education FTE, not including gifted students, which is 453,053.67 FTE in the 2021-22 3rd calculation.

SB 2524 increases the 2022-23 cap by 1,969 students. After 2022-23, the cap will continue to grow by 1.0 percent of the state’s total exceptional student education FTE, not including gifted students. The differences, and ultimately the impact, of this change can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: FES-UA Maximum Program Size

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Current Cap Forecast	20,000	24,531	29,211	33,953	38,756	43,611
SB 2524 Cap Forecast		26,500	31,200	35,962	40,785	45,660
Difference		1,969	1,989	2,009	2,029	2,049

*The cap does not reflect the total number of students in the program in the program, as there are exclusions to the cap.

Siblings of FES-UA scholarship students are eligible for the FES-EO scholarship. The ratio of FES-EO siblings of FES-UA students to the total number of FES-UA students was 0.087 in 2021-22 (SUF5). Expanding the FES-UA program will produce insignificant upward pressure on the FES-EO program. There is no impact to the FEFP for prior-public school siblings receiving a FES scholarship. However, prior-nonpublic siblings will result in positive insignificant pressure on the FEFP. Further, the greater the number of prior-public school FES-UA siblings awarded an FES-EO scholarship, the more significant the negative effect on COFTE would be.

F) Conclusion

The effect of FES-UA is at least +1,969 FTE on the FEFP FTE and 0 on COFTE for the horizon. The FEFP FTE impact grows over the forecast years, reflecting the 1% increase on the incremental cap gain and the assumption that the program will continue to reach the cap in each of the forecast years. The effect of FES-UA siblings on FES-EO is positive insignificant for FEFP FTE and negative insignificant on COFTE for the entire forecast series.

Section 3: Adopted Cumulative Effects on FEFP FTE and COFTE Enrollment Forecasts

	Adopted Cumulative Effect	
	<i>FEFP FTE</i>	<i>COFTE</i>
2022-23	+1,969	Negative Insignificant
2023-24	+1,989	Negative Insignificant
2024-25	+2,009	Negative Insignificant
2025-26	+2,029	Negative Insignificant
2026-27	+2,049	Negative Insignificant