

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

BILL: SB 1396

INTRODUCER: Senator Cruz

SUBJECT: Educational Dollars for Duty Program

DATE: January 24, 2022

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Brown</u>	<u>Caldwell</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>Pre-meeting</u>
2.	_____	_____	<u>ATD</u>	_____
3.	_____	_____	<u>AP</u>	_____

I. Summary:

Senate Bill 1396 increases program options for members of the state National Guard to include an online degree program provided by a public or nonpublic postsecondary institution or technical center in the state or another state, subject to accreditation.

The Educational Dollars for Duty program presently caps payment of tuition and fees at the highest in-state cost at a public postsecondary institution for tuition and fees. If the program is an online degree program, the bill bases the cap on the highest tuition rate charged by a public postsecondary institution in this state or another state. The highest tuition rate imposed in another state could be significantly higher than that charged in Florida.

II. Present Situation:

The Educational Dollars for Duty Program, established in 2009, provides an educational benefit exclusively for members of the state National Guard. Specifically, the program affords tuition and fee assistance to qualifying members of the state National Guard who are presently domiciled in the state.¹ The program provides financial assistance to an eligible member enrolled in an authorized course of study at an accredited public or private postsecondary institution or technical center, or at a training center for industry certification.² Preference and priority is given to a person previously deployed on federal military orders while serving in the National Guard.³

¹ Section 250.10(7), F.S.; ch. 2009-123, Laws of Fla.

² *Id.*

³ Section 250.10(8)(a), F.S.; s. 3, ch. 2009-123, Laws of Fla.

Administered by the Department of Military Affairs, funding is subject to legislative appropriation.⁴ In Fiscal Year 2021-2022, the Legislature allocated \$4,167,900 for the program.⁵ The appropriation included limitations on spending, which are:

- Applicants seeking undergraduate or postgraduate degrees in science, technology, engineering, or math are prioritized for funding.
- No more than \$450,000 of the appropriation may be used to fund tuition for non-STEM postgraduate degrees.
- Funding for a postgraduate degree must be matched at a rate of fifty percent by the applicant.

When appropriated, the department may pay the full cost of tuition and fees for current National Guard members who take courses at a public postsecondary institution or vocational-technical program (s. 250.10(8), F.S.) If, however, the eligible member is enrolled at a private postsecondary institution or vocational-technical program, payment is set at up to the highest in-state tuition and fees at a public postsecondary education institution or public vocational-technical program.

During the 2020-2021 fiscal year, the program provided educational assistance to 3,123 state National Guard members. As of January 14, 2022, 2,600 state National Guard members participate in the program.⁶

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

This bill increases program options for members of the state National Guard to authorize an online degree program provided by a public or nonpublic postsecondary institution or technical center in the state or another state, subject to accreditation.

The Educational Dollars for Duty program presently caps payment of tuition and fees at the highest in-state cost at a public postsecondary institution for tuition and fees. If the program is an online degree program, the bill bases the cap on the highest tuition rate charged by a public postsecondary institution in this state or another state. The highest tuition rate imposed in another state could be significantly higher than that charged in Florida.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2022.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

⁴ Section 250.10(7) and (8), F.S.

⁵ Specific Appropriation 2931, Section 6, General Government, General Appropriations Act.

⁶ Florida Department of Education, *2022 Agency Legislative Bill Analysis, Senate Bill 1396* (Jan. 13, 2022) (on file with the Senate Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security).

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

This bill would provide more paid options for members of the National Guard who seek educational assistance.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The Educational Dollars for Duty program presently caps payment of tuition and fees at the highest in-state cost at a public postsecondary institution for tuition and fees. If the program is an online degree program, the bill bases the cap on the highest tuition rate charged by a public postsecondary institution in this state or another state. The highest tuition rate imposed in another state could be significantly higher than that charged in Florida.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends section 250.10 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.
