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MEMORANDUM

TO: Florida Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

FROM: Douglas S. Bell & Aimee Diaz Lyon

DATE: March 26, 2026

SUBJECT: Final 2026 Legislative Session Update

The Legislature adjourned, Sine Die, on Friday, March 13, 2026. Senate President Ben Albritton and House Speaker Danny Perez announced a goal of coming back to Tallahassee for a Special Session to pass a budget for the upcoming fiscal year. The exact dates have yet to be announced, though the 2026-2027 fiscal year begins July 1st.

In total, the Legislature passed 237 bills (including 44 local bills) out of the 1,896 bills filed during the 2026 Legislative Session. Two significant bills that did not pass the full legislature were [SB 1756](#) by Sen. Clay Yarborough (R-Jacksonville) and [HB 917](#) by Rep. Jeff Holcomb (R-Springhill), the medical freedom legislation which contained vaccine provisions. SB 1756 did pass the Senate by a vote of 23-15, but was not heard in the House. However, there is a possibility that child vaccination legislation could reemerge in any future special session. During this interim period, FCAAP continues to educate legislators on the importance of childhood vaccinations.

Below is a summary of legislation that passed both chambers that may be of interest to FCAAP members.

Legislation of Interest (listed alphabetically)

Animal Welfare – [HB 559](#) by Rep. Linda Chaney (R-St. Petersburg) creates new third-degree felony offenses if a person eighteen years of age or older causes or entices a minor to commit, or in the presence of a minor, commits an aggravated animal cruelty, fighting or baiting animals; or sexual activities involving animals. If a minor commits an animal cruelty offense, a juvenile court must

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order a minor to undergo a psychological evaluation and, if recommended, receive counseling or treatment for a length of time as prescribed by the juvenile court. HB 559 also updates requirements related to the animal abuse database maintained by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on October 1, 2026.

Agency for Persons with Disabilities – [HB 565](#) by Rep. Allison Tant (D-Tallahassee) requires the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) to recognize Tatton-Brown-Rahman syndrome as a qualifying condition for APD services and requires all employees, instead of only managers and supervisors, of APD-licensed adult day training and residential facilities to undergo a level 2 background screening. The bill also requires APD to contract with a state university to survey qualified organizations, waiver support coordinators, iBudget clients about waiver support coordination services. APD must also furnish a gap analysis about the geographic distribution and caseload capacity across the state and submit a report of the full survey results to the Governor and Legislature by February 15, 2027.

Except as otherwise provided, if approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on July 1, 2026.

Child Care and Early Learning Services – [SB 1690](#) by Sen. Alexis Calatayud (R- Miami) makes several statutory changes relating to early childhood education and child care regulation. SB 1690 requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and local licensing agencies to disseminate electronically certain information regarding all child care facilities and removes the annual requirements for family day care homes and large family child care homes to provide parents with information related to flu shots and leaving children in a vehicle unattended. Specifically the bill adds early learning programs for children from birth to five years of age to the definition of the Department of Education direct-support organization, establishes the Florida Child Care Fund within the organization to support early learning and child care needs, and requires the Division of Early Learning to annually prepare a report on the performance of the program and the program's fundraising activities by January 1 of each year, beginning January 1, 2027. SB 1690 also expands, subject to appropriation, the role of the TEACH Scholarship Program administrator to establish and administer the Center for Early Childhood Professional Recognition.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on July 1, 2026.

Child Pornography Terminology - [HB 245](#) by Rep. Jessica Baker (R-Jacksonville) replaces the term "child pornography" with the term "child sexual abuse material" throughout Florida Statutes.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on July 1, 2026.

Dangerous Crimes – [HB 445](#) by Rep. Sam Greco (R-Palm Coast) is "Missy's Law," and provides that the court must remand a person to custody immediately if the person pleads guilty or nolo contendere to, or is found guilty of a dangerous crime, and requires such person remain in custody pending sentencing. HB 445 also adds "any violation related to computer pornography or child exploitation," to the list of dangerous crimes.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on July 1, 2026.

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Diabetes Research – [SB 816](#) by Sen. Jennifer Bradley (R-Flemming Island) codifies the University of Florida Diabetes Institute within the University of Florida College of Medicine as a statewide resource for diabetes research, prevention, treatment, and education, and focuses on all forms of diabetes, including type 1, type 2, and gestational diabetes. Beginning October 15, 2027, the Institute must submit an annual report to the Governor and Legislature detailing research projects and findings, clinical services provided and patient outcomes, community outreach and prevention initiatives, and recommendations for future initiatives.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on July 1, 2026.

Drowning Prevention – [SB 428](#) by Sen. Clay Yarborough (R-Jacksonville) revises the age requirements for children receiving vouchers through Swimming Lesson Voucher Program to be between one and seven years of age and requires DOH to develop educational materials on drowning prevention safety measures and safe bathing practices. SB 428 requires hospitals, birth centers, and home birth providers to provide educational materials to new parents and caregivers as part of their postpartum education and care.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on July 1, 2026.

Dry Needling – [HB 867](#) by Rep. Adam Anderson (R-Tarpon Springs) authorizes occupational therapists to perform dry needling and directs the Florida Board of Occupational Therapy Practice to adopt minimum standards governing its use.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on July 1, 2026.

Education – [HB 1279](#) by Rep. Kincart Jonsson (R-Bartow) makes various changes to the education statutes. HB 1279 modifies provisions related to virtual and digital instruction and school choice, authorizes schools to purchase, maintain, and administer FDA approved epinephrine delivery devices, rather than limiting references to epinephrine auto-injectors, clarifies that a school district or charter school may use any combination of safe-school officer options authorized by law, modifies provisions related to early learning provider accountability, requires applied algebra courses as a part of mathematics pathways, clarifies Title I expenditures, and provides a dance course substitution for graduation. HB 1279 modifies provisions related to individual education plans, educational emergencies, and students struggling with reading. HB 1279 also modifies provisions related to advanced and acceleration courses and examinations, requires fee-based service providers serving individuals who are blind or visually impaired to disclose whether equivalent or substantially similar services are available at no cost through the Division of Blind Services or another public agency, replaces the vocational rehabilitation service provider registration process with an application and approval framework, revises provisions relating to private postsecondary institution governance, transfer degree approvals, and licensure, revises requirements for changes to institutional accreditation and authorized accreditors, modifies the State University System performance-based funding model, and revises provisions relating to residency, tuition waivers, the Benacquisto Scholarship Program, and Florida Prepaid College program administration

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Florida Birth-Related Neurological Injury Compensation Association – [SB 1668](#) by Sen. Colleen Burton (R-Winter Haven) amends operational and financial requirements for the Florida Birth-Related Neurological Injury Compensation Association (NICA), codifies current benefit policies, increases access to psychotherapy providers, requires continuous comprehensive major medical health coverage for the participant or enrollment in Medicaid, and requires the Plan to cover a participant's premiums and out-of-pocket costs. The bill also requires NICA to compensate the Medicaid program for services furnished to Plan participants, authorizes NICA to recoup overpaid expenses from family members via an administrative proceeding and revises NICA financial oversight by establishing timelines for existing provider assessments and restructuring the remedies available to OIR for addressing potential financial unsoundness of NICA.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

Grants for Genetic Counseling Education – [HB 1115](#) by Rep. Adam Anderson (R-Tarpon Springs) creates the Genetic Counseling Education Enhancement Grant Program within State University System to support the development, growth and sustainability of graduate level genetic counseling programs.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on July 1, 2026.

Health Care Patient Protection – [HB 355](#) by Rep. Vanessa Oliver (R-Punta Gorda) requires AHCA, in consultation with the Florida Emergency Medical Services for Children State Partnership Program, to adopt rules that establish minimum standards for pediatric patient care in hospital emergency departments (ED). The bill requires all hospitals with EDs to develop and implement policies and procedures for pediatric patient care in the ED, and to designate a physician, physician assistant, nurse, or paramedic to serve as the pediatric emergency care coordinator in the ED. Finally, the bill requires all hospital EDs to conduct the National Pediatric Readiness Assessment in accordance with timelines established by the National Pediatric Readiness Project.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on July 1, 2026.

Human Trafficking Education for Nurse Licensure – [SB 340](#) by Sen. Gayle Harrell (R-Stuart) requires graduates of professional and practical nursing programs to complete a two-hour course on human trafficking to be eligible to sit for the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX), a prerequisite for full licensure, beginning January 1, 2027.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on July 1, 2026.

Law Enforcement Officer Interactions with Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder – [SB 418](#) by Sen. Shevrin Jones (D-Miami Gardens) creates the "Blue Envelope and Blue Card Program" within the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles to improve communication between individuals with autism spectrum disorder and law enforcement officers during motor vehicle-related interactions.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on July 1, 2026.

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Naturopathic Medicine – [SB 688](#) by Sen. Ana Maria Rodriguez (R-Doral) reestablishes the licensure and regulation of naturopathic doctors in Florida by redesignating chapter 462, F.S., as “Naturopathic Medicine” and by updating the chapter’s regulatory framework. SB 688 defines the scope of naturopathic practice to include specified diagnostic and natural treatment modalities but expressly excludes prescriptive authority for legend drugs or prescription drugs, except as expressly provided for certain natural, nonpharmacologic substances.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on December 31, 2026.

School Safety - [HB 757](#) by Rep. Michelle Salzman (R-Cantonment) requires sheriffs to assist public postsecondary educational institutions in implementing guardian programs, authorizes public postsecondary educational institutions to participate in the school guardian program, requires a sheriff to establish a guardian training program or contract with certain other sheriff’s offices to do so in certain circumstances, creates the offense of discharging a weapon or firearm within 1,000 feet of a school, ranks the newly created firearm discharge offense on the Criminal Punishment Code offense severity chart, requires public postsecondary institutions without an existing security app to promote the suspicious activity reporting tool, mandates the transfer of specific educational records, including threat assessments, from K-12 to Florida College System institutions or state universities, expands teacher training to address school safety protocols and authorize universities and colleges to share otherwise confidential records with law enforcement agencies when necessary, and establishes the ARMOR Act, requiring public postsecondary institutions to adopt active assailant response plans, threat management teams, mental health support protocols, and annual security.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect upon becoming law, except where otherwise provided.

Sexual Offenses - [HB 1159](#) by Rep. Berny Jacques (R-Clearwater) replaces term "child pornography" with term "child sexual abuse material" throughout statute, increases criminal penalties for use of a child in a sexual materials or activities, requires an offender who was 18 years of age or older at the time of the offense to be sentenced to a mandatory minimum sentence for specified offenses related to the use or promotion of a child in a sexual performance or transmission of child sexual abuse material, subject to specified exceptions, increases mandatory minimum sentences for specified repeat sexual offenders, creates a life felony for aggravated use of a child in a sexual performance when a child is under 12, creates a second degree felony for transmitting generated child sexual abuse materials, and prohibits a person convicted of specified sexual offenses involving animals from owning or working or volunteering with an animal for at least 5 years.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on July 1, 2026.

Sickle Cell Disease Care Management and Treatment Continuing Education – [SB 844](#) by Sen. Shevrin Jones (D-Miami Gardens) requires information related to the treatment of pain for patients with sickle cell disease to be included in the continuing education course on controlled substance prescribing required for licensure renewal of certain health care practitioners registered to prescribe controlled substances.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on July 1, 2026.

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Specific Medical Diagnoses in Child Protective Investigations – [HB 47](#) by Rep. Robin Bartleman (D-Weston) provides an exception to the requirement that DCF immediately forward certain allegations to a law enforcement agency if there is a reported specified preexisting diagnosis. The bill also requires Child Protection Teams to consult with a licensed physician or advanced practice registered nurse when evaluating a report of medical neglect or a child with a certain preexisting diagnosis. The bill allows a parent or legal custodian from whom a child was removed to request specified examinations of the child.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on July 1, 2026.

Student Health and Safety – [HB 1201](#) by Rep. Jim Mooney (R-Key Largo) requires DOH's educational programs to include training on epilepsy, broadens the definition of "school" to include charter schools, revises individualized seizure action plans to ensure the plan aligns with the form determined by a medical professional, requires all employees in regular contact with a student with epilepsy or seizure disorders to complete training, with such training remaining valid for 5 years, and mandates schools to display a poster describing the steps for responding to a seizure.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on July 1, 2026.

Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder – [HB 851](#) by Rep. Rob Long (D-Boynton Beach) requires each school district's professional learning system to provide at least one autism-specific professional learning opportunity annually for instructional personnel and school-based administrators. HB 851 also requires the professional learning to be developed in consultation with the district's assigned Center for Autism and Related Disabilities to include evidence-based practices for supporting students with autism spectrum disorder across all levels of need, including academic instruction, behavioral supports, communication strategies, and inclusive practices.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on July 1, 2026.

Temporary Certificates for Practice in Areas of Critical Need – [HB 809](#) by Rep. Benarroch (R-Naples) authorizes a certificate holder to continue providing primary care services to patients in an area of critical need after the area has lost its designation if the practitioner maintains an active primary care treatment relationship in the area with at least one patient and satisfies all other applicable requirements.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

Uterine Fibroid Research Database – [HB 327](#) by Rep. Lisa Dunkley (D-Lauderhill) removes the prohibition against including personal identifying information in the uterine fibroid research database. [HB 1515](#) by Rep. Lisa Dunkley (D-Lauderhill) provides an exemption from public records requirements for certain records and personal identifying information submitted to the Department of Health for inclusion in the uterine fibroid research database.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on the same date that HB 1515 takes effect if that bill becomes a law.