

## Florida's In-State Tuition for Dreamers: What You Need to Know

### January 2025

In 2014, Florida's then-Gov. Rick Scott signed [House Bill 851](#), allowing undocumented students, both with and without DACA, to pay in-state tuition rates at state colleges and universities by using out-of-state tuition waivers. While these students are not eligible for federal financial aid, including Pell grants and federal loans, or state financial aid programs like the Bright Futures Scholarships and need-based aid, the policy has provided thousands of Dreamers with access to affordable higher education.

Over the past decade, this access has not only benefitted the students themselves but also has strengthened Florida's economy and workforce. However, recent legislative proposals threaten to repeal these waivers, putting this progress at risk.

### Benefits of Keeping the Waivers for Dreamers

- [Strengthens Florida's economy](#): According to the non-partisan Florida Policy Institute (FPI), allowing Dreamers to access in-state tuition rates **has not cost the state money**. Instead, it has **generated millions in revenue** for higher education institutions. Eliminating these waivers could result in a nearly \$15 million loss annually in tuition and fees for Florida colleges and universities.
- [Addresses workforce shortages](#): Dreamers are pursuing studies and careers in critical economic sectors such as **healthcare, STEM, and business**, helping to bridge workforce gaps in Florida.
- [Significant contributions to higher education](#): In the 2023-2024 academic year, Dreamers utilizing out-of-state waivers **contributed \$14.7 million** in tuition to the Florida College System. Miami Dade College alone received over **\$2 million** from Dreamers, helping to fund programs and services that benefit all students. .
- [Prevents barriers to higher education](#): Tripling tuition costs would make higher education inaccessible for most Dreamers, creating financial barriers that many families could not overcome.

### State of Play of In-State Tuition in Florida

In February 2023, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis announced a set of [legislative proposals](#) on immigration, including a measure to strip in-state tuition access for Dreamers. However, this proposal did not advance during the 2023 legislative session.

On December 9, 2024, [Senate Bill 90](#) was filed in the Florida legislature for consideration during the 2025 legislative session. This proposed bill seeks to eliminate the out-of-state tuition waivers that allow undocumented students to pay in-state tuition rates at state colleges and universities.

On January 13, 2025 Florida Governor Ron DeSantis called for legislators to convene a [special session](#) beginning the week of January 27 with a focus on immigration. The following day, on January 14, 2025, Senator Randy Fine filed [Senate Bill 244](#) for consideration during this

session. The proposed legislation would prohibit certain Florida colleges and universities from admitting undocumented individuals and would repeal the out-of-state waivers that allow undocumented students to pay in-state tuition rates.

### **Special Sessions (Bills Under Consideration During the Current Special Session)**

On January 26, 2025, Senator John Martin filed [Senate Bill 20-A](#). This proposed legislation, set to be considered during the special session starting on January 27, 2025, seeks to eliminate out-of-state tuition waivers that currently allow undocumented students to pay in-state tuition rates at state colleges and universities.

On January 27, 2025, the Florida Legislature refused to hold the special session on immigration originally scheduled for that date and instead pivoted to convene their own special session. During this session, they introduced their own measures on immigration: [House Bill 1-B](#) (with its companion bill, [Senate Bill 2-B](#)), which cover a wide range of immigration issues. Among the provisions in these bills, Section 38 and 39 focus specifically on tuition for undocumented students. The legislature is [now in special session](#) and is expected to deliberate on this proposed legislation from Monday, January 27, 2025 through Wednesday, January 29, 2025.

#### **House Bill 1-B and Senate Bill 2-B would do the following:**

- Section 38 of the bills would eliminate access to in-state tuition for undocumented students by eliminating the out-of-state tuition waiver.
- Section 39 of the bills would require that undocumented students currently eligible for in-state tuition through the out-of-state waiver be reevaluated for eligibility by July 1, 2025.

### **Current Requirements for in-state tuition for Dreamers in Florida:**

The out-of-state tuition waiver allows undocumented students who have grown up and gone to school in the state of Florida to pay in-state tuition fees at state colleges and universities (see *below for in-state versus out-of-state tuition comparison*). To qualify, these students must meet the following [requirements](#):

1. Attend a secondary school in Florida for at least 3 consecutive years before graduation;
2. Apply for enrollment in an institution of higher education within 24 months after high school graduation; and
3. Submit an official Florida high school transcript as evidence of attendance & graduation.

### **Additional Background: What Would Senate Bills 244, 90 and 20-A Do?**

#### **Senate Bill 244**

- Prohibit Admission of Undocumented Individuals: Certain Florida colleges and universities, specifically those with an acceptance rate below 85%, would be prohibited from accepting applications from or admitting undocumented students.

*For more information about the Higher Ed Immigration Portal, please [visit here](#).*

- **Eliminate Tuition Waiver:** The bill would repeal the current waiver that allows undocumented students to pay in-state tuition rates at Florida state colleges and universities.
- **Effective Date:** If passed, the legislation would go into effect on July 1, 2025.

#### **Senate Bill 90**

- **Eliminate Tuition Waiver:** The bill would repeal the current waiver that allows undocumented students to pay in-state tuition rates at Florida state colleges and universities.
- **Effective Date:** If passed, the legislation would go into effect on July 1, 2025.

#### **Senate Bill 20-A (Special Session A-No Longer Being Considered)**

- **Eliminate Tuition Waiver:** The bill would repeal the current waiver that allows undocumented students to pay in-state tuition rates at Florida state colleges and universities.
- **Severability Clause:** The bill includes a severability clause, ensuring that if any provision is deemed invalid, the remaining provisions will still be enforceable and applicable.
- **Effective Date:** If passed, the legislation would go into effect on July 1, 2025.

#### **Comparison of In-State Tuition vs. Out-of-State Tuition (2025-26 Academic Year)**

Without the waiver, Dreamers would face tuition costs that are three to four times higher, putting higher education out of reach for most families.

<b>Institution</b>	<b><u><a href="#">UF</a></u></b>	<b><u><a href="#">FSU</a></u></b>	<b><u><a href="#">UCF</a></u></b>	<b><u><a href="#">FIU</a></u></b>
<b>In-State Tuition</b>	\$6,380	\$5,604	\$5, 954	\$3,084
<b>Out-of-State Tuition</b>	\$28,658	\$18,749	\$20,980	\$9,283
<b>Acceptance Rate</b>	<b><u><a href="#">23%</a></u></b>	<b><u><a href="#">21.8%</a></u></b>	<b><u><a href="#">43%</a></u></b>	<b><u><a href="#">59%</a></u></b>

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