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# [Don't Stifle Florida's Education Innovation](#)

Florida has been [a leader in education innovation](#) over the last decade, but one bill currently under review by the state senate's Policy & Steering Committee on Ways and Means--[Senate Bill 1676](#)--threatens to wipe much of that out with one misguided and foolhardy swipe.

In its present form, the bill restricts the [Florida Virtual School \(FLVS\)](#)--one of the bigger policy and public education innovation success stories--in such ways that, as its president, Julie Young, said, "[it] would drastically impact our long-standing commitment to support the educational needs of all students of this state."

This would be tragic, as FLVS possesses many of the hallmarks of an innovation that has the opportunity to help transform public education from its present monolithic, one-size-fits-all form into a far more student-centric experience.

Starting in 1997, the state enacted a series of policies over several years that allowed Florida to capture the growing online learning tidal wave. From establishing FLVS as an autonomous educational entity in the state with significant freedom to pursue its mission to serve students with learning opportunities offered at any time, any place, any path, and any pace to creating a unique self-funding model based not on a student's seat-time but instead on performance-based mastery, the decisions allowed Florida Virtual School to grow to serve roughly 84,000 students this school year--at last, the long sought-after scaleable model in education seemingly arrived.

FLVS grew by following a classic disruptive path as it has competed initially against non-consumption--that is, by competing where the alternative has been nothing at all. Many schools, particularly in rural areas, for example, are unable to offer advanced courses, yet there are many students in those schools who would welcome the opportunity to take an advanced course. Other students in the inner cities fail courses and need an opportunity to recover the credits, yet because of the monolithic system in which they are stuck, there is no real option for them to make up these courses. FLVS' online courses come to both the students' and school's aid and offers solutions for both.

What's so insidious about the bill before the Florida Senate committee is that it strikes at exactly these areas that have made FLVS a welcome disruptive--and therefore potentially transformative--innovation. The bill stipulates that FLVS would no longer be able to offer AP

courses or any other courses outside of the core curriculum and that it would no longer be able to offer courses for credit recovery or grade forgiveness.

The bill also eliminates the extra 11.4 percent full-time student add-on that FLVS began receiving a few years ago to compensate it for the fact that it only receives funds if its students pass a class successfully--whereas all other schools receive funding no matter the outcome for the student.

FLVS can most likely overcome this cut by better leveraging its technology platform, but the limitations on FLVS' offerings are nothing short of a disaster. The Florida Senate would be wise to cut these restrictive provisions rather than risk threatening 13 years of strong education innovation leadership.

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