

Protecting the vulnerable: Florida House approves tougher screening for employees of care centers

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Employees of Florida's day-care centers and nursing homes would face stricter background screenings under a bill passed unanimously by the state House of Representatives on Thursday.

"What it does is provide additional protection for Florida's most vulnerable citizens, including the elderly and disabled," said Rep. William Snyder, R-Stuart.

The bill, which requires nationwide background checks and tighter restrictions on people with criminal histories, was filed after a Sun-Sentinel series in September found that Florida's caregivers included convicted felons and career criminals with records for rape, child abuse and even murder.

Gov. Charlie Crist issued a statement Thursday in support of the reforms.

"Florida must continue making significant strides to ensure the safety of those individuals in our care by thoroughly screening the backgrounds of those who work with children, elders, persons with disabilities — and then verifying those screening results before employees are authorized to go to work," he said.

The bill still must pass the Florida Senate, where it has cleared one key committee.

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<http://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/state/protecting-the-vulnerable-florida-house-approves-tougher-screening-397498.html>

