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Representative Valdés Continues “Ought to Be a Law” Program

Working With High School Students to Pass a Bill in the 2024 Session

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Yesterday, **Representative Valdés (D-Tampa)** held a townhall for the Ought to Be a Law (OTBAL) program. She partnered with Hillsborough County Public Schools to kick off this educational program, which provides students the opportunity to work with a state elected official in drafting, lobbying, and presenting a bill to be heard in the State’s 60-day Legislative Session. **Representative Valdés** left one of her seven bill slots open for this student-led bill.

“This serves as an opportunity for students to see how an idea becomes law in the real world of politics and the legislative process, while honing their advocacy and research skills,” said **Representative Valdés**. “The Hillsborough County Ought to be a Law Program is the best interactive civics education that the school district can provide. I am proud to continue carrying on the tradition since 2018 as a Representative Sponsor.”

Students from Lennard High School, Sickles High School, and Sumner High School presented their bill ideas to panelist which include, **Representative Valdés**, **Representative Dianne Hart (D-Tampa)**, and **Representative Karen Gonzalez Pittman (R-Tampa)**, as well as Hillsborough County School Board Members. After their presentations, the panel selected Sickles High School’s Food Allergy and Intolerance Standards bill proposal. The winners will now work with Representative Valdés who will present the legislation in Tallahassee during the 2024 Session.

“It’s amazing for our students to have the opportunity to take things that they’re passionate about, bring it in front of the decision makers of the state and our school district, talk about it and get feedback on how these things go forward and how they move,” said **Tony Pirota**, OTBAL Project Coordinator and Sumner HS Teacher. “They have their voices heard.”

“It was wonderful to witness tomorrow’s leaders present solutions to today’s problem,” said **Representative Hart**. “All three teams had thorough presentations on various legislative matters that in speaking with my colleagues hadn’t even crossed our minds. That is why it continues to be critically important that young people are involved in the governing process. They see the world through a different lens, noticing problems that many of us don’t see. They have bright ideas about the future and I was honored to be there to help them begin the process of turning their ideas into law.”

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