

# Firm that received \$1M secret state payment details expenses

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(Photo: File)

TALLAHASSEE - A psychologist whose business received a \$1 million secret appropriation with the help of a state senator friend used much of the money for salaries and software used in a mental health screening program she developed, records show.

Catherine Drew, president and CEO of Florida Psychological Associates, paid herself \$82,141, more than half of the \$176,223 in salary paid to her firm with state money. Another \$30,544 went toward payroll taxes and overhead expenses, according to records she provided to House Speaker Richard Corcoran.

Drew paid 10 other employees who worked on a mental health screening program that struggled to meet benchmarks in a contract with Florida State University.

Drew also paid \$148,200 to a Fernandina Beach company for software used in the screening program. She also spent \$12,672 on laptop computers, Internet network gear and Kindle Fire tablets used in the program, documents show.

The documents turned over to Corcoran this week came in response to his demand for more details about how the state money was spent. FSU said it would return \$200,000 it received from the \$1 million payment that Sen. Aaron Bean, R-Fernandina Beach, helped Drew secure.

Corcoran's demand followed reports by the Naples Daily News that Bean helped Drew and her husband secure the money, and emails with the Drews suggested Bean would help them market their program in other states. Bean has denied any business relationship with Florida Psychological Associates.



In this 2016 photo, Sen. Aaron Bean, R-Fernandina Beach, closes on his sponsored bill concerning religious freedom during session in Tallahassee. (Photo: Steve Cannon, AP)

"Florida Psychological Associates has voluntarily provided more than one thousand pages of correspondence, financial records and contract documents to Speaker Corcoran's office," Drew said in a statement Thursday. "It was a tremendous undertaking to cull and prepare this information in less than a week, but we are confident that anyone who objectively reviews what we have submitted would conclude that FPA has managed the mental health screening project in a responsible and professional manner."

Emails included with the documents show Drew and her husband, Nassau County Tax Collector John Drew, had to convince FSU officials the software named CELPHIE used in her mental health program was better than other software known as Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment in use by other Florida school districts.

Catherine Drew sent emails to FSU officials explaining that the CELPHIE software was better and less expensive.

Drew explained to Sharon Woodall, associate dean of finance and administration for the FSU medical school, that the CELPHIE software is owned by American Screener Company. The company is based in Fernandina Beach but registered as a Nevada business, records show.

The Nevada business license for American Screener shows the company is managed by Clyde Davis, who is a partner in the law firm that includes Brett Steger, the Amelia Island lawyer who drafted the response to Corcoran for the Drews.

**Previous coverage:**

- **[Documents: Florida legislator helped friend with secret \\$1 million state payment \(/story/news/politics/2017/03/18/senator-helped-friend-secret-1-million-state-payment-aaron-bean/98679188/\)](#)**
- **[Document suggests former state Sen. Thrasher violated lobbying ban as FSU chief \(/story/news/politics/2017/02/17/did-florida-state-university-president-john-thrasher-violate-lobby-ban/97939436/\)](#)**
- **[State senator's friends got \\$1M from Florida, but their firm fell short of goals \(/story/news/local/florida/2017/03/23/firm-owned-friend-senator-fails-deliver/99451494/\)](#)**
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Florida Psychological Associates stood to receive \$800,000 from the state money and has received \$590,191 as of last month, despite failing to meet monthly benchmarks in its contract with FSU.

The documents Corcoran received accounted for \$420,699, Steger noted in a summary of information. Salaries, software licenses and expenses for supplies and travel came to \$367,074. Another \$44,874 was listed under "general and administrative" overhead, and another \$8,750 went toward rent, documents show.

It's not clear from the documents sent to Corcoran how \$169,492 was spent by Florida Psychological Associates.

Last week FSU provided Corcoran with invoices, contracts and emails related to the project, documenting rushed efforts to establish an agreement that was to govern the program through July that FSU officials said they didn't seek and were not aware of until contacted by Bean.

The program was mired by delays brought on by a review board that had to approve the project before it could be used in school districts and courthouses across Northeast Florida. The project was to have conducted 3,800 screenings by February but completed 241.

Additional emails Florida Psychological Associates provided indicated plenty of confusion as it embarked on the project approval process while it also negotiated a contract.

The university delayed one September payment to Florida Psychological Associates until the review board approved the program for use in schools. But that money was added to a subsequent invoice, documents show.

Implementation of the program in criminal courts has yet to receive approval from the FSU review board.

Corcoran also sent a letter demanding Florida Polytechnic University provide details into the \$3 million it received for an online anti-hazing education program that was to be used around the state.

FPU contracted with Miami-based Educational Management Services, which failed to expand the program to the state's 12 universities but still collected \$1.7 million. The company has until Friday to provide Corcoran with documents.

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