

Tab 1	SB 110 by Simon ; Compare to H 01397 Rural Communities
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Tab 2	SB 68 by Martin ; Similar to H 00229 Health Facilities Authorities
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Tab 3	SB 218 by Arrington ; Identical to H 00039 Tax Exemption for Disabled Ex-servicemembers
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577630 A S CA, Arrington btw L.28 - 29: 02/27 09:51 AM

Tab 4	SB 384 by Burton ; Identical to H 00275 Annexing State-owned Lands
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756800 A S CA, Burton Delete L.33: 02/27 09:51 AM

The Florida Senate
COMMITTEE MEETING EXPANDED AGENDA

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
Senator McClain, Chair
Senator Fine, Vice Chair

MEETING DATE: Monday, March 3, 2025
TIME: 3:30—5:30 p.m.
PLACE: Mallory Horne Committee Room, 37 Senate Building

MEMBERS: Senator McClain, Chair; Senator Fine, Vice Chair; Senators Jones, Leek, Osgood, Passidomo, Sharief, and Trumbull

TAB	BILL NO. and INTRODUCER	BILL DESCRIPTION and SENATE COMMITTEE ACTIONS	COMMITTEE ACTION
1	SB 110 Simon	Rural Communities; Requiring the state land planning agency to give preference for technical assistance funding to local governments located in a rural area of opportunity; authorizing eligible counties to receive a distribution of sales and use tax revenue; creating the Office of Rural Prosperity within the Department of Commerce; creating the Public Infrastructure Smart Technology Grant Program within the Office of Rural Prosperity; requiring, rather than authorizing, that certain funds received from the State Transportation Trust Fund be used for the Small County Road Assistance Program, etc.	CA 03/03/2025 FP
2	SB 68 Martin (Similar H 229)	Health Facilities Authorities; Revising the definition of the term "health facility" to include other entities and associations organized not for profit; revising the powers of health facilities authorities to include the power to issue certain loans and execute related loan agreements; specifying requirements for projects financed by loan agreements issued by a health facilities authority, etc.	CA 03/03/2025 HP RC
3	SB 218 Arrington (Identical H 39)	Tax Exemption for Disabled Ex-servicemembers; Increasing the value of a tax exemption for certain disabled ex-servicemembers, etc.	CA 03/03/2025 FT AP
4	SB 384 Burton (Identical H 275)	Annexing State-owned Lands; Requiring a municipality proposing to annex state-owned lands to notify the county legislative delegation at a certain time, etc.	CA 03/03/2025 EN RC

COMMITTEE MEETING EXPANDED AGENDA

Community Affairs

Monday, March 3, 2025, 3:30—5:30 p.m.

TAB	BILL NO. and INTRODUCER	BILL DESCRIPTION and SENATE COMMITTEE ACTIONS	COMMITTEE ACTION
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Other Related Meeting Documents

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Community Affairs

BILL: SB 110

INTRODUCER: Senator Simon

SUBJECT: Rural Communities

DATE: February 28, 2025

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Fleming	Fleming	CA	Pre-meeting
2.			FP	

I. Summary:

SB 110 addresses a number of issues for the benefit of rural communities in the state. Namely, the bill creates a statewide office to coordinate the advancement of rural communities and opportunity therein, and to that aim amends a swathe of programs and regulations across various departments and policy areas.

Regarding the Department of Commerce (department), the bill creates the Office of Rural Prosperity (office) within the department to serve as the state’s dedicated office for rural local governments. The bill transfers administration of existing rural community grant programs currently administered by the department, to the newly established office, and creates two new grant programs benefitting rural communities: the Renaissance Grant Program and the Public Infrastructure Smart Technology Grant Program.

Among other directives, the office is responsible for:

- Providing training and technical assistance to rural local governments;
- Creating an online Rural Resource Directory for rural local governments to navigate available state and federal resources and funding opportunities; and
- Establishing a network of seven regional rural community liaison centers across the state to provide in-person state support to rural communities to enhance communication and increase access to state and federal resources for rural areas of the state.

The bill also:

- Enhances the Rural Economic Development Initiative to promote rural local government participation in state grant and other program opportunities and evaluate opportunities to waive certain grant program requirements for rural governments.
- Directs OPPAGA to routinely evaluate the effectiveness of the office and also study strategies implemented by other states to support and enhance rural communities;

- Directs OPPAGA and the Office of Economic and Demographic Research to jointly review the impact of Florida Statutes on rural communities and evaluate whether appropriate metrics are applied in current law to define rural areas and communities.

To further healthcare access in rural communities, the bill:

- Creates the Stroke, Cardiac, and Obstetric Response and Education (SCORE) Grant Program within the Department of Health (DOH) to implement training, purchase equipment, establish telehealth capabilities, and develop quality improvement programs with the goal of improving patient outcomes and increasing access to high-quality stroke, cardiac, and obstetric care in rural communities;
- Creates the Rural Access to Primary and Preventative Care Grant Program (RAPP-C) program within the DOH to provide incentive funding for primary care physicians and autonomous Advanced Practice Registered Nurses to open new practice locations in rural and underserved areas of the state; and
- Expands the existing Rural Hospital Capital Improvement Grant Program (RHCI) to allow rural hospitals to use grant funds to establish mobile care units to provide primary care services, behavioral health services, or obstetric and gynecological services in rural health professional shortage areas (HPSA) or to establish telehealth kiosks to provide urgent care services in rural HPSAs.

Regarding the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), the bill:

- Creates the Florida Arterial Road Modernization (FARM) program to provide investment in rural arterial roads to enhance the safety, reliability and resiliency for critical state facilities; and
- Provides additional annual funds to the FDOT to enhance the Small County Road Assistance Program (SCRAP) and revises Small County Outreach Program (SCOP) funding eligibility requirements.

Regarding the Department of Education, the bill:

- Expands authorized services under regional consortium service organizations (regional consortia), increases to \$150,000 the per member funding for such regional consortia, and authorizes all revenue to be carried forward for specified purposes;
- Creates the Regional Consortia Service Organization Supplemental Services Program to provide additional financial resources for regional consortia to provide specified programs and services to school districts and consortia members;
- Establishes the Rural Incentive for Professional Educators program to provide a student loan repayment of up to \$15,000 for teachers and administrators to live and work at a public or private school in rural areas of opportunity;
- Removes the requirement that school districts receiving funds under the Special Facility Construction Account (SFCA) budget toward the project the value of 1 mill from its discretionary ad valorem levy; and
- Modifies the calculation for the deducted amount from total tax revenue that must be shared with district charter schools for future projects under the SFCA.

Regarding affordable housing, the bill:

- Provides funding for and directs the Florida Housing Finance Corporation to issue competitive requests for application to preserve multifamily housing funded through U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) loans in rural areas.
- Authorizes local governments to utilize a certain percentage of State Housing Initiatives Program (SHIP) funds on projects to preserve USDA-financed multifamily housing in rural areas.
- Increases the minimum SHIP allocation from \$350,000 to \$1 million for counties and eligible municipalities.

Regarding fiscally constrained counties, the bill:

- Amends the criteria for being designated as a fiscally constrained county.
- Changes the revenue source for the fiscally constrained counties distribution from the direct-to-home satellite service tax to sales tax.
- Provides to fiscally constrained counties a distribution from sales tax in an amount equal to no less than \$50 million each year.
- Makes several changes to the fiscally constrained counties distribution, including changing distribution factors for allocating revenue among counties and creating spending requirements.

The bill makes several appropriations to the Department of Commerce (\$16.8 million recurring general revenue, \$74.7 million nonrecurring general revenue, and \$750,000 recurring trust fund); the Department of Education (\$35.6 million recurring general revenue); and the Department of Health (\$6.3 million recurring general revenue, \$55 million nonrecurring general revenue, and \$8.2 million recurring trust fund). The bill redirects funds to the Department of Transportation for specific purposes, but requires the department to submit budget amendments to receive the funds. The bill also provides for an increased share of state tax revenues for fiscally constrained counties. See Section V. Fiscal Impact Statement.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2025.

II. Present Situation:

The present situation for each issue is described below in Section III, Effect of Proposed Changes.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Present Situation:

The Department of Commerce

The Department of Commerce (department) is Florida's lead agency for working with the Legislature, state agencies, business leaders, and economic development professionals to formulate and implement coherent and consistent policies and strategies designed to promote economic opportunities for all Floridians.¹ The department is also the state's chief agency for

¹ Section 20.60(4) F.S.

business recruitment and expansion.² The department must also promote viable, sustainable communities by providing technical assistance and guidance on growth and development issues, grants, and other assistance to local communities.³

The head of the department is the Secretary of Commerce, who is appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate.⁴ The secretary may create offices within the Office of the Secretary and within the divisions to promote efficient and effective operation of the department.⁵ The department must also ensure that the state's goals and policies relating to economic development, workforce development, community planning and development, and affordable housing are fully integrated with appropriate implementation strategies.⁶

To achieve these goals, the Legislature established seven divisions and offices within the department:

- Economic Development
- Community Development
- Workforce Services
- Finance and Administration
- Information Technology
- Office of the Secretary
- Office of Economic Accountability and Transparency⁷

The agency is charged with managing the activities of public-private partnerships and state agencies in order to avoid duplication and promote coordinated and consistent implementation of programs including among other things, rural community development.⁸ This includes stimulation of economic development and job creation in rural areas, including strategies for rural marketing and the development of infrastructure in rural areas.⁹ Additionally, the department runs a number of financial and grant programs aimed at helping small rural communities in Florida.

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Office of Rural Prosperity

The bill creates the Office of Rural Prosperity (office) within the department for the purpose of supporting rural communities, helping navigate available state and federal resources, and representing rural interests across state government. The office will serve as the state point of contact for rural local governments and will administer various rural-focused grant programs currently administered by the department, as well as new programs created in the bill.

² *Id.*

³ Section 20.60(4) (c) F.S

⁴ Section 20.60(2) F.S.

⁵ Section 20.60(3)(b), F.S.

⁶ Section 20.60(3), F.S.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Section 20.60(4)(e) F.S.

⁹ Section 20.60(5)(a)c F.S.

Section 1 amends s. 20.60, F.S., to formally designate the office as one of eight permanent offices or divisions under the department.

Section 11 creates s. 288.013, F.S., to establish the framework and responsibilities of the office. The office will be led by a director, who will be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate.

The bill directs the office to provide training and technical assistance to rural local governments on various community and economic development topics. Offered either in person or online, the training and technical assistance must, at a minimum, address the following:

- Accessing state and federal resources;
- Best practices relating to comprehensive planning, economic development, and land development in rural communities;
- Strategies to address management and administrative capacity challenges for rural local governments; and
- Requirements or recent changes to the Community Planning Act and other state and federal laws affecting rural local governments.

Rural Resource Directory

The bill directs the office to create and maintain an online Rural Resource Directory to serve as an interactive tool to help rural local governments navigate state and federal resources, tools, and services available to them. The directory must allow users to search by various indicators and receive notifications when new or modified resources are available. Each state agency must provide information and updates to the office for inclusion in the directory and, to the greatest extent possible, the directory must include information on local financial match requirements for state and federal grant programs.

Regional Rural Community Liaison Centers

By October 1, 2025, the office must establish and staff 7 regional rural community liaison centers across the state for the purpose of providing in-person state support to rural local governments. The office must by rule divide the state into 7 regions and assign a liaison center to each region. Each liaison center will be staffed with at least two full-time department personnel who will be responsive to the rural local governments within the respective region. Specifically, liaison centers are required, at a minimum, to do the following:

- Work with local governments to plan and achieve goals for local or regional growth, economic development, and rural prosperity;
- Facilitate access to state and federal resources, such as grants, loans, and other aid or resources.
- Advise on waivers for rural local governments for certain requirements for state and federal programs, such as local financial match waivers.
- Coordinate technical assistance needs with the department and other state or federal agencies.
- Promote model ordinances, policies, and strategies related to economic development.
- Regularly engage with the Rural Economic Development Initiative.

- Assist local governments with regulatory and reporting compliance.

Annual Report

By December 1, 2025, and each year thereafter, the office director must submit to the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representative, and the Administration Commission a written report describing the office's operations and accomplishments for the preceding year. The report must also be presented by the office director in-person at a meeting of the Administration Commission and posted to the office website. In preparing the report, the office must consult with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services on recommendations for policies, programs, and funding to further support the needs of rural communities.

OPPAGA Reports

The bill directs OPPAGA to produce the following revolving reports relating to the office and rural communities in Florida:

- By December 15, 2026, and every year thereafter until 2028, OPPAGA must review the effectiveness of the office and submit a report of its findings to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Beginning in 2029, the frequency of the review is reduced to every 3 years.
- By December 15, 2027, and every 3 years thereafter, OPPAGA must review strategies implemented by other states on rural community preservation, enhancement, and revitalization and report on their effectiveness and potential for implementation in Florida. The report must be submitted to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.
- By December 15, 2026, OPPAGA must review each state-funded or state-administered grant and loan program for local governments for local financial match requirements and evaluate whether waivers for rural local governments may be appropriate. The review must also evaluate application evaluation criteria for such program and whether special accommodations or preferences for rural local governments may be appropriate. The report must be submitted to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Section 42 appropriates \$1,827,591 in recurring funds and \$652,327 in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund to the to the Department of Commerce for the staffing and operation of the Office of Rural Prosperity, which includes funding for 17 full-time equivalent positions for the office.

Present Situation:

Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI)

The Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) was established by the Legislature to encourage and facilitate the location and expansion of major economic development projects of

significant scale in rural communities.¹⁰ Today, the REDI operates as a statewide initiative led by the Department of Commerce (department) to better serve Florida's rural communities by providing a more focused and coordinated effort among state and regional agencies to improve the fiscal, economic, and community viability of these areas.¹¹

Specified agencies and organizations¹² are required to designate a high-level staff person to serve as their REDI representative. Each REDI representative is responsible for ensuring that their agency or organization is informed about REDI and helps to identify opportunities to accommodate or include rural local governments in their agency programs.

REDI is required to review and evaluate the impact of statutes and rules on rural communities and work to minimize any adverse impact and undertake outreach and capacity-building efforts.¹³ Under the REDI statute, a rural community is defined as:

- A county with a population of 75,000 or fewer;
- A county with a population of 125,000 or fewer, if the county is contiguous to a county with a population of 75,000 or fewer;
- Any municipality in a county that meets the above criteria; or
- An unincorporated federal enterprise community or an incorporated rural city with a population of 25,000 or fewer, with an employment base focused on traditional agriculture or resource-based industries, located in a county not defined as rural, and which has at least three or more economic distress factors.¹⁴

Each REDI member agency is required to review financial match requirements for projects in rural areas and develop a proposal to waive or reduce match requirements, and such proposals must be submitted to REDI.¹⁵ REDI must call a meeting within 30 days of receipt of such proposals for comment and recommendation.¹⁶ Waivers and reductions must be requested by the county or community, and to the fullest extent possible member organizations must expedite rule and amendment adoption to incorporate the reduction in match by rural areas in financial distress.¹⁷ REDI must prepare an annual report as a supplement to the Department of Commerce's annual report which includes in an evaluation on the status of changes to rules, number of awards made with waivers, and recommendations for future changes.¹⁸

Based on recommendations of the REDI, the Governor may designate up to three rural areas of opportunity (RAOs) by executive order,¹⁹ which establishes certain local governments as a

¹⁰ Section 288.0656(1)(a) F.S.

¹¹ Section 288.0656(3), F.S.

¹² The Department of Transportation, Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Department of State, Department of Health, Department of Children and Families, Department of Corrections, Department of Education, Department of Juvenile Justice, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, each water management district, CareerSource Florida, Inc., VISIT Florida, the Florida Regional Planning Council Association, Agency for Health Care Administration, the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS). See s. 288.0656(6)(a), F.S.

¹³ Section 288.0656(4), F.S.

¹⁴ Section 288.0656(2)(e) F.S.

¹⁵ Section 288.06561 F.S.

¹⁶ Section 288.06561(3) F.S.

¹⁷ Section 288.06561(4) and (7) F.S.

¹⁸ Section 288.06561(8) F.S.

¹⁹ Section 288.0656(7)(a), F.S.

priority for the department. The orders also permit all state agencies and departments to use all available tools and resources to the extent permissible by law to promote the creation and development of projects designated by the RAO that has been recommended by the department.²⁰

Rural Area of Opportunity

A RAO is a rural community,²¹ or region comprised of rural communities, designated by the Governor, that has been adversely affected by an extraordinary economic event, severe or chronic distress, or a natural disaster.²² An area may also be designated as an RAO if it presents a unique economic development opportunity of regional impact.²³ The designation of an RAO must be agreed upon by the Department of Commerce, as well as the county and municipal governments to be included in the RAO.²⁴

This designation establishes these areas as priority assignments for REDI and allows the Governor, acting through REDI, to waive criteria, requirements, or similar provisions of any economic development initiative. Such incentives include, but are not limited to, the Quick Response Training Program²⁵, the Quick Response Training Program for participants in the welfare transition program²⁶, transportation projects²⁷, the brownfield redevelopment bonus refund²⁸, and the rural job tax credit program²⁹.

Currently, there are three designated RAO areas:

- **Northwest RAO**: Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Wakulla, and Washington counties, and portions of Walton County (the City of Freeport and lands north of the Choctawhatchee Bay and intercoastal waterway).
- **South Central RAO**: DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, and Okeechobee counties, and the cities of Pahokee, Belle Glade, and South Bay in Palm Beach County and the city of Immokalee in Collier County.
- **North Central RAO**: Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Putnam, Suwannee, Taylor, and Union counties.³⁰

²⁰ Executive Orders 20-170, 21-149, and 23-132 available at https://www.flgov.com/eog/sites/default/files/executive-orders/2024/EO_20-170.pdf, https://www.flgov.com/eog/sites/default/files/executive-orders/2024/EO_21-149.pdf, and <https://www.flgov.com/eog/sites/default/files/executive-orders/2024/EO-23-132.pdf> (last visited Feb. 25, 2025)

²¹ Section 288.0656(2)(e), F.S.

²² Section 288.0656(2)(d), F.S.

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ Section 288.0656(7)(b), F.S.

²⁵ Section 288.047 F.S.

²⁶ Section 288.047(8) F.S.

²⁷ Section 339.2821 F.S.

²⁸ Section 288.107 F.S.

²⁹ Sections 212.098 and 220.1895 F.S.

³⁰ Department of Commerce, *Rural Areas of Opportunity*, available at <https://floridajobs.org/community-planning-and-development/rural-community-programs/rural-areas-of-opportunity> (last visited Feb. 25, 2025). The economic development organizations for these RAOs are named Opportunity Florida, Florida's Heartland Regional Economic Development Initiative, and the North Florida Economic Development Partnership, respectively.

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 19 amends s. 288.0656, F.S., to modernize the REDI statute to enhance the visibility and effectiveness of the program. Specifically, the bill:

- Moves creation of the REDI from within the department generally, to the Office of Rural Prosperity;
- Requires REDI to meet at least monthly and requires the REDI representative or his or her designee to be physically present or available electronically;
- Provides a legislative finding that rural communities are the essential conduits for the economy's distribution, manufacturing, and food supply;
- Removes a reference to "economically distressed" rural communities to broaden REDI's reach to all rural communities;
- Requires enhanced reporting on projects being coordinated by REDI and enhanced reporting on program requirement waivers granted to rural communities;
- Requires REDI to provide legislative recommendations for statutory waivers or reductions for economic development programs for rural applicants; and
- Repeals obsolete language regarding rural enterprise zones, catalyst projects, and catalyst sites.

Section 15 amends s. 288.019, F.S., to enhance rural considerations in grant review and evaluation processes. The bill requires REDI member agencies and organizations to review grant and loan application evaluation criteria and scoring procedures to ensure full access for rural communities. Each agency must develop a proposal to modify evaluation and scoring procedures to accommodate rural communities, including opportunities to waive or reduce required financial match requirements.

Section 16 amend s. 288.021, F.S., to require that when practicable, the staff member appointed as the economic development liaison of a state agency shall also serve as the agency representative for the REDI.

Section 20 repeals s. 288.06561, F.S., pertaining to reduction or waivers of financial match requirements. The general substance of this statute is incorporated into the revisions of section 15 of the bill.

Section 23 repeals s. 290.06561, which is a remnant statute from the repealed Enterprise Zone program.

*Effect of Proposed Changes:***Renaissance Grant Program**

Sections 12 creates s. 288.014, F.S., to establish the Renaissance Grant Program to be administered by the Office of Rural Prosperity (office). Under the program, the office will provide \$1 million block grants to counties which are "growth-impeded," meaning a county has had a declining population over the last ten years, as certified by the Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR). By October 1, 2025, EDR must certify to the office which counties are growth-impeded. After the initial certification, the EDR shall annually certify

whether each participating county remains growth-impeded, until the county has three consecutive of population growth.

Participating counties must enter into an agreement with the office to receive the \$1 million block grant and have broad authority to design a specific plan to achieve population growth within the specified parameters.

Participating counties must design a plan to make targeted investments in the community to achieve population growth and increase the economic vitality of the community. The plan must incorporate the following key features:

- Technology centers with extended hours located within schools and administered by the local school boards;
- Facilities that co-locate adult day care with childcare facilities; and
- Technology labs managed by Florida College System institutions or career centers.

Each participating county must hire a renaissance coordinator who is responsible for overseeing the use of funds, coordinating with other entities, and complying with reporting requirements. Upon request, the regional rural community liaison center staff must provide training and assistance to the renaissance coordinator.

The bill directs the Auditor General to conduct an operational audit of each participating county's grant program every two years, beginning in 2026. Additionally, on December 31, 2026, and each year thereafter, the EDR must submit an annual report of grant recipients by county to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The Renaissance Grant Program expires in 2040.

Section 43 appropriates \$8 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund to the Office of Rural Prosperity for the Renaissance Grant Program. No funds may be used by the state for administrative costs.

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Public Infrastructure Smart Technology Grants

Sections 13 creates s. 288.0175, F.S., to establish the Public Infrastructure Smart Technology Grant Program to be administered by the Office of Rural Prosperity (office). The program is created to fund and support infrastructure projects in rural communities that utilize smart technology to increase efficiency, enhance public services, and promote sustainable development.

The bill directs the office to contract with one or more not-for-profit entities (lead organization) that specializes in smart regional planning to provide grants to counties and municipalities within a rural area of opportunity for public infrastructure smart technology projects. The bill defines "public infrastructure smart technology" as systems and applications that use connectivity, data analytics, automation to improve public infrastructure by increasing efficiency, enhancing public services, and promoting sustainable development.

The office contract must require a lead organization to:

- Collaborate with rural counties and municipalities to identify opportunities to institute cost-effective smart technology, and provide technical assistance; and
- Assist such counties and municipalities in connecting with other communities, companies, and other entities to leverage the impact of each public infrastructure smart technology project.

The office must include in its annual report a description of the projects funded under this program.

Section 44 appropriates \$500,000 in recurring funds from the Grants and Donations Trust Fund to the Office of Rural Prosperity for the Smart Technology Grant Program.

Present Situation:

Florida Office of Broadband

The Office of Broadband (office) is an office created within the Division of Community Development³¹ in the Department of Commerce (department) for the purpose of providing broadband internet service to residents of Florida including: libraries, schools, colleges and universities, health care providers, and community organizations.³² Under the office, the department may apply for and accept federal funds, enter into contracts, and establish any committee or workgroups to administer the program.³³

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 22 amends s. 288.9961, F.S., to:

- Require the Office of Broadband to consult with regional rural community liaisons centers to assist with providing feedback from rural communities in applying for federal grants for broadband internet services.
- Require annual and quarterly reports be submitted to Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives detailing broadband implementation in rural, unserved, and underserved communities, as well as operations and accomplishments of the office.

Present Situation:

Regional Rural Development Grants Program

The Regional Rural Development Grants Program was established to provide funding, through matching grants, to build the professional capacity of regionally based economic development organizations located in rural communities. The concept of building the professional capacity of an economic development organization includes hiring professional staff to develop, deliver, and

³¹ Section 288.9961(4) F.S.

³² Section 288.9961(1) F.S.

³³ Section 288.9961(5) F.S.

provide economic development professional services. Professional services includes technical assistance, education and leadership development, marketing, and project recruitment.³⁴

Applications submitted to the Department of Commerce (department) for funding through this program must provide proof:³⁵

- Of official commitments of support from each of the units of local government represented by the regional organization;
- That the regional organization is in existence and actively involved in economic development activities serving the region; and
- Of the manner in which the organization coordinates its efforts with those other local and state organizations.

A contract or agreement that involves the expenditure of grant funds must include³⁶:

- The purpose of the contract or agreement.
- Specific performance standards and responsibilities for each entity under the contract or agreement.
- A detailed project or contract budget, if applicable.
- The value of any services provided.
- The projected travel expenses for employees and board members, if applicable.

An organization may receive up to \$50,000 a year or \$250,000 for any three regional economic development organizations that serve an entire RAO.³⁷ The department is authorized to spend up to \$750,000 each fiscal year from funds appropriated to the Rural Community Development Revolving Loan Fund to carry out this program.³⁸

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 14 amends s. 288.018, F.S., to move administration of the program from the Department of Commerce generally, to the Office of Rural Prosperity.

Present Situation:

Rural Infrastructure Fund

The Rural Infrastructure Fund is a grant program created to facilitate the planning, preparing, and financing of infrastructure projects in rural communities.³⁹ The program provides access to federal and state infrastructure funding programs, including, but not limited to, those offered by the United States Departments of Agriculture and Commerce and including those offered by Rural Economic Development Initiative agencies.⁴⁰ The program funds total infrastructure project grants, infrastructure feasibility grants, and preclearance review grants.

³⁴ Section 288.018(1)(b), F.S.

³⁵ Section 288.018(2), F.S.

³⁶ Section 288.018(3)(a), F.S.

³⁷ Section 288.018(1)(c), F.S.

³⁸ Section 288.018(4), F.S.

³⁹ See s. 288.0655, F.S.

⁴⁰ Section 288.0655(2)(b), F.S.

The Department of Commerce (department) may award grants for up to 75 percent of the total infrastructure cost, or up to 100 percent of the total infrastructure project cost for a project that is located in a rural community that is also located in a fiscally constrained county⁴¹ or a RAO.⁴² Additionally, projects may include improving any inadequate infrastructure that has resulted in regulatory action that prohibits economic or community growth or reducing the costs to community users of proposed infrastructure improvements that exceed such costs in comparable communities.

Eligible uses of funds include improvements to public infrastructure for industrial or commercial sites and upgrades to or development of public tourism infrastructure.⁴³ Infrastructure can include public or public-private partnership facilities, like storm water systems, telecommunication, roads or other remedies to transportation impediments, nature-based tourism facilities and physical requirements necessary to facilitate tourism, trade, and economic development activities.⁴⁴ The department may award grants of up to \$300,000 for infrastructure feasibility studies, design and engineering activities, or other infrastructure planning and preparation activities.⁴⁵ The total project participation grant may be used in conjunction with the infrastructure feasibility grant.

To enable local governments to access the resources the department may award grants for surveys, feasibility studies, and other activities related to the identification and preclearance review of suitable land.⁴⁶ Authorized grants under program may not exceed \$75,000 each, except in the case of a project in a rural area of opportunity, in which case the grant may not exceed \$300,000.⁴⁷

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Sections 18 amends s. 288.0655, F.S., to:

- Move administration of the program from the Department of Commerce generally, to the Office of Rural Prosperity.
- Clarify that grant funds may be awarded for “site readiness” expenses, which may include clearing title, surveys, permitting, environmental studies, and regulatory compliance costs.
- Require the Office of Rural Prosperity to consult with the Department of Transportation instead of Visit Florida when reviewing applications for funding.
- Require enhanced annual reporting of the program.

⁴¹ A fiscally constrained country is any county that is entirely within a rural area of opportunity as designated by the Governor pursuant to s. 288.0656, F.S., or each county for which the value of a mill will raise no more than \$5 million in revenue, based on the taxable value certified pursuant to s. 1011.62(4)(a)1.a., F.S., from the previous July 1. Section 218.67(1), F.S.

⁴² Section 288.0655(2)(b), F.S.

⁴³ *Id.*

⁴⁴ Broadband Internet service must be provided in partnership with one or more dealers of communications services. Section 288.0655(2)(b), F.S.

⁴⁵ Section 288.0655(2)(c), F.S.

⁴⁶ Section 288.0655(2)(e), F.S. Expedited permitting is pursuant to s. 403.9739(18), F.S.

⁴⁷ *Id.*

Section 46 appropriates \$40 million in nonrecurring funds and \$5 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund to the Office of Rural Prosperity for the Rural Infrastructure Fund.

Present Situation:

Rural Community Development Revolving Loan Fund

The Rural Community Development Revolving Loan Fund Program is administered by the Department of Commerce to facilitate the use of existing federal, state, and local financial resources by providing local governments with financial assistance to further promote the economic viability of rural communities.⁴⁸

The program provides for long-term loans, loan guarantees, and loan loss reserves to units of local governments, or economic development organizations in counties with populations of 75,000 or fewer, or within any county with a population of 125,000 or fewer which is contiguous to a county with a population of 75,000 or fewer.⁴⁹ Loans must be made pursuant to agreements specifying the terms and conditions agreed to between the applicant and the department, and loans are the legal obligations of the applicant.⁵⁰ All repayments of principal and interest must be returned to the loan fund and made available for loans to other applicants.

However, in a rural area of opportunity, repayments of principal and interest may be retained by the applicant if repayments are dedicated and matched to fund regionally based economic development organizations representing the rural area of opportunity.⁵¹

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 17 amends s. 288.065, F.S., to:

- Move administration of program from the Department of Commerce generally, to the Office of Rural Prosperity.
- Require the Office of Rural Prosperity to include in its annual report detailed information about the fund, including loans made during the previous fiscal year, loans active, loans repaid, and unobligated funds.

Section 45: Appropriates \$4 million in nonrecurring funds and \$1 million in recurring funds from General Revenue to the Office of Rural Prosperity for the Rural Community Development Revolving Loan Fund.

Present Situation:

Community Planning Technical Assistance Grants

The Department of Commerce's (department) Community Planning office is charged with providing technical assistance and guidance on growth and development issues, grants, and other

⁴⁸ Section 288.065 (1) F.S.

⁴⁹ Section 288.065 (2)(a) F.S.

⁵⁰ Section 288.065 (2)(b) F.S.

⁵¹ Section 288.065 (2)(c) F.S.

assistance to local communities to promote viable, sustainable communities.⁵² Community Planning Technical Assistance (CPTA) Grant Program is administered by the department to provide counties, municipalities and regional planning councils the opportunity to create innovative plans and development strategies to promote a diverse economy, vibrant rural and suburban areas and meet statutory requirements for planning, while also protecting environmentally sensitive areas.⁵³ CPTA grants may also be used to assist with disaster recovery, resiliency and economic development planning.⁵⁴

Projects should relate to community planning and economic development strategies that implement the requirements in the Community Planning Act, as well as workforce development, and workforce housing opportunities.⁵⁵

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 2 amends s. 163.3168, F.S., to:

- Require preference to be given to local government applicants located in a rural area of opportunity.
- Require the department to consult with the Office of Rural Prosperity when awarding funding for these grants.

Present Situation:

Florida Rural Economic Development Strategy Grants

The Department of Commerce (department), under s. 288.0657, F.S., accepts and administers money which is appropriated to the department for providing grants to assist rural communities in developing and implementing strategic economic development plans.⁵⁶ The rural community must be counties with populations of 75,000 or fewer, or within any county with a population of 125,000 or fewer which is contiguous to a county with a population of 75,000 or fewer, or a municipality therein.⁵⁷ The department must establish criteria for reviewing grant applications under this section. These criteria include, but are not limited to, the degree of participation and commitment by the local community and the application's consistency with local comprehensive planning.⁵⁸

⁵² Section 20.60 (4)(c) F.S.

⁵³ Department of Commerce, Community Planning Technical Assistance Grants, State Fiscal Year 2024-2025, available at <https://floridajobs.org/community-planning-and-development/programs/community-planning-table-of-contents/technical-assistance/community-planning-technical-assistance-grant> (last viewed January 21, 2025)

⁵⁴ *Id.*

⁵⁵ *Id.*

⁵⁶ Section 288.0657 (2) F.S.

⁵⁷ Section 288.0657 (1) F.S.

⁵⁸ Section 288.0657(4) F.S.

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Sections 21 amends s. 288.0657, F.S., to:

- Move administration of the program from the Department of Commerce generally, to the Office of Rural Prosperity.
- Specify that grants may be provided to assist with costs associated with marketing sites to potential businesses for an economic development project;
- Require the regional rural community liaison centers within the Office of Rural Prosperity to provide assistance to those applying for grants.
- Provide that marketing grants may include funding to deploy materials through advertising campaigns and costs associated with marketing, site preparation, meetings, trade missions, and professional development.

Section 47 appropriates \$250,000 in recurring funds from the Grants and Donations Trust Fund to the Office of Rural Prosperity for the Rural Economic Development Strategy Grants.

*Present Situation:***Inventory of Communities Seeking to Recruit Businesses**

Each year by September 30 of each year, a county or municipality that has a population of at least 25,000 or its local economic development organization must submit to the Department of Commerce (department) a brief overview of the strengths, services, and economic development incentives that its community offers.⁵⁹ The local government or its local economic development organization also must identify any industries that it is encouraging to locate or relocate to its area.⁶⁰ Such local governments and organizations seeking to recruit businesses may submit information and may participate in any activity or initiative resulting from the collection, analysis, and reporting of the information to the department.⁶¹

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 10 amends s. 288.007, F.S., to require each local government within a rural area of opportunity or its local economic development organization to submit the required information the Department of Commerce to be included in the inventory of communities seeking to recruit businesses.

⁵⁹ Section 288.007 F.S.

⁶⁰ *Id.*

⁶¹ *Id.*

*Present Situation:***Agreements Funded with Federal or State Assistance**

Current law requires an agency agreement that provides state financial assistance to a recipient or subrecipient,⁶² or that provides federal financial assistance to a subrecipient, to include the following:

- A provision specifying scope of work that clearly establishes the tasks the recipient or subrecipient is required to perform;
- A provision dividing the agreement into quantifiable units of deliverables that must be received and accepted in writing by the agency before payment. Each deliverable must be directly related to the scope of work and must specify the required minimum level of service to be performed and the criteria for evaluating the successful completion of each deliverable;
- A provision specifying the financial consequences that apply if the recipient or subrecipient fails to perform the minimum level of service required in the agreement. The provision can be excluded in specified situations;
- A provision specifying that a recipient or subrecipient of federal or state financial assistance may expend funds only for allowable costs resulting from obligations incurred during the specified agreement period;
- A provision specifying that any balance of unobligated funds which has been advanced or paid must be refunded to the state agency;
- A provision specifying that any funds paid in excess of the amount to which the recipient or subrecipient is entitled must be refunded to the state agency; and
- Any additional information required pursuant to the Florida Single Audit Act.⁶³

Current law prohibits an agency agreement that provides state or federal financial assistance to local government entities within an RAO from requiring the local government entity to expend funds in order to be reimbursed. For these local government entities, an agency is authorized to advance funding based on an analysis of estimated costs, to pay service providers and vendors directly, or to undertake other options to meet the requirements of the agreement, allowing local governments in rural areas to be paid without spending their own capital first.⁶⁴

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 6 amends s. 215.971, F.S., to:

- Clarify provisions regarding the payment of invoices due and require agencies to expedite such payment requests for local governments.
- Require each state agency to annually report to the Office of Rural Prosperity (office), by August 1, a summary of the implementation of this provision for the previous fiscal year, which shall be incorporated in the office annual report.

⁶² Section 215.97, F.S., defines a “subrecipient” as a nonstate entity that receives state financial assistance through another nonstate entity.

⁶³ Section 215.971(1)(a)-(g), F.S.

⁶⁴ Section 215.971, F.S (h) F.S.

*Present Situation:***The Florida Small Business Development Center Network**

Established in 2008, the Florida Small Business Development Center Network (SBDC) is the principal business assistance organization for small businesses in the state. The purpose of the network is to serve emerging and established for-profit, privately held businesses that maintain a place of business in the state.⁶⁵ The network is a consortium of regional small business development centers throughout the state that offer current and prospective small businesses consulting services, training opportunities, and access to other resources and information.⁶⁶ Regional centers are based at several of Florida's colleges and universities.⁶⁷ The SBDC is run by network's statewide director in consultation with a 19 member statewide advisory board.⁶⁸

The network is funded in part by the U.S. Small Business Administration, Department of Defense, State of Florida through appropriations, and other private and public partners, with the University of West Florida serving as the Network's designated lead host institution.⁶⁹ Half of any state funds received directly by a host institution which are specifically designated for the network are distributed for the following purposes:

- Ensuring that support services are available statewide, especially in underserved and rural areas of the state, to assist eligible businesses;
- Enhancing participation in the network among state universities and colleges; and
- Facilitating the adoption of innovative small business assistance best practices by the regional small business development centers.

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 9 amends s. 288.001, F.S., to:

- Require the SBDC Network to use certain funds for the specific purpose of expanding service in rural communities, including developing an activity plan focused on network consultants and resources in rural communities.
- Increase staffing for "circuit riders" who work with local governments and communities of their region to bring services, including access to capital, technical assistance, and other small business services to the region.

Section 41 appropriates \$1 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund to the Office of Rural Prosperity to implement the requirements of the rural-focused Florida SBDC Network activity.

⁶⁵ Ch. 2008-149, L.O.F., codified as s. 288.001, F.S.

⁶⁶ America's SBDC Florida, Consulting Services, Available at <https://floridasbdc.org/> (last visited Jan. 26, 2025)

⁶⁷ America's SBDC Florida, Our Network, Available at <https://floridasbdc.org/> (last visited Jan. 26, 2025)

⁶⁸ Section 288.001 (3-4) F.S.

⁶⁹ America's SBDC Florida, About Funding, Available at <https://floridasbdc.org/about/> (last visited Jan. 26, 2025)

*Present Situation:***Fiscally Constrained Counties**

Fiscally constrained counties are counties entirely within an RAO or where a 1-mill levy would raise no more than \$5 million in annual tax revenue.⁷⁰ A “rural area of opportunity” is a rural community, or a region composed of rural communities, designated by the Governor, which has been adversely affected by an extraordinary economic event, severe or chronic distress, or a natural disaster. A rural area of opportunity may also be a community or communities that present a unique economic development opportunity of regional impact.⁷¹

There are 29 counties that currently meet these conditions; Baker, Bradford, Calhoun, Columbia, Desoto, Dixie, Franklin, Gadsden, Gilchrist, Glades, Gulf, Hamilton, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Liberty, Madison, Okeechobee, Putnam, Suwannee, Taylor, Union, Wakulla, and Washington.⁷² Although each of the counties is designated by the Governor as a rural area of opportunity,⁷³ Highlands’ and Putnam’s 1-mill levy currently surpass the \$5 million threshold.

Direct-to-Home Satellite Service Tax Distribution

Retail sales of direct-to-home satellite service received in Florida are subject to the communications service tax at the rate of 9.07 percent and the gross receipts tax at the rate of 2.37 percent.⁷⁴

From communications services tax receipts, 55.9 percent is distributed through the state’s “standard” sales tax distribution formula.⁷⁵ The remaining 44.1 percent is transferred to the local government half-cent sales tax trust fund.⁷⁶

Seventy percent of the transfer is distributed formulaically to all counties within the state. The remaining 30 percent is distributed to fiscally constrained counties that are eligible to participate in the local government half-cent sales tax distribution.⁷⁷ Fiscally constrained counties may use the funds from this distribution for any public purpose, except for debt service.⁷⁸

⁷⁰ Section 218.67(1), F.S.

⁷¹ Section 288.0656, F.S.

⁷² Florida Department of Revenue, *Fiscally Constrained Counties*, https://www.floridarevenue.com/property/Documents/fcc_map.pdf (last visited Feb. 6, 2025).

⁷³ Executive Office of the Governor, see Executive Orders 20-170, 21-149, and 23-132, <https://www.flgov.com/eog/news/executive-orders> (last visited Feb. 6, 2025).

⁷⁴ Sections 202.12(1)(b) and 203.01(1)(b)2., F.S.

⁷⁵ Section 202.18(2)(b), F.S. See also: s. 212.20(6)(d), F.S. Gross receipts tax revenues are distributed to the Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) and Debt Service Trust Fund in accordance with section 9 of Article XII of the State Constitution.

⁷⁶ Section 202.18(2)(c)1., F.S.

⁷⁷ *Id.*

⁷⁸ Section 218.67(5), F.S.

The collections from the tax on direct-to-home satellite service have declined in recent years; decreasing from \$18.1 million in Fiscal Year 2018-2019 to \$10.1 million in Fiscal Year 2023-2024.⁷⁹

Distribution Factors

Each fiscally constrained county receives a portion of the total direct-to-home satellite service distribution. At the beginning of each fiscal year, the Department of Revenue determines the amount to be distributed to each fiscally constrained county using the prior fiscal year's certified school taxable value, county millage rate, and latest April 1 county population, excluding prisoners.⁸⁰ The following factors are created by the department to determine each county's relative share of the total distribution available for the coming fiscal year:⁸¹

- The relative revenue-raising-capacity factor is based on a county's certified school taxable value and population and referred to in law as the ability of a county to generate property tax revenues from 1 mill on a per capita basis.⁸² Counties that generate less per capita revenue receive a higher factor. For example, a county that raises \$25 or less per capita receives a factor value of 1; whereas a county that raises more than \$50 per capita receives a factor value of 0. In Fiscal Year 2024-2025, only three fiscally constrained counties were eligible for this factor.⁸³
- The local-effort factor is based on a county's millage rate and referred to in law as a measure of the relative level of local effort of a county as indicated by the millage rate levied for the prior fiscal year.⁸⁴ This factor guarantees that each county receives a portion of the total distribution. It uses the most recently adopted countywide operating millage rate for each eligible county and multiplies that millage rate by 0.1. For example, a county with a countywide operating millage rate of 6.73 would receive a factor value of 0.673.

Sales and Use Tax

Florida levies a 6 percent tax on the sale or rental of most items of tangible personal property,⁸⁵ admissions,⁸⁶ transient rentals,⁸⁷ and a limited number of services, as well as a 2 percent tax on commercial leases.⁸⁸ Sales tax is added to the price of the taxable good or service and collected from the purchaser at the time of sale.⁸⁹ Counties are authorized to impose local discretionary sales surtaxes in addition to the state sales tax.⁹⁰

⁷⁹ Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research, *Ordinary, Emergency, Supplemental, and Fiscally-Constrained Distributions by County: SFY 1987-2024*, <https://edr.state.fl.us/Content/local-government/data/data-a-to-z/g-l.cfm> (last visited Feb. 6, 2025).

⁸⁰ Section 186.901, F.S.

⁸¹ Section 218.67(3)(a), F.S.

⁸² *Id.*

⁸³ Email correspondence with staff at the Department of Revenue, Feb. 6, 2025 (on file with the Committee on Finance and Tax).

⁸⁴ Section 218.67(3)(b), F.S.

⁸⁵ Section 212.05(1)(a)1.a., F.S.

⁸⁶ Section 212.04(1)(b), F.S.

⁸⁷ Section 212.03(1)(a), F.S.

⁸⁸ Section 212.031, F.S.

⁸⁹ Section 212.07(2), F.S.

⁹⁰ Section 212.055, F.S.

A portion of Florida's state sales and use tax collections are distributed to all eligible counties and municipalities through the County and Municipal Revenue Sharing programs and the Local Government Half-Cent Sales Tax program. These programs distributed to fiscally constrained counties, including municipalities within the counties, approximately \$363.0 million in Fiscal Year 2023-2024.⁹¹

In contrast to the tax on direct-to-home satellite service, collections from sales tax have increased from \$28.5 billion in Fiscal Year 2018-2019 to \$41.1 billion in Fiscal Year 2023-2024.⁹² Additionally, sales tax collections are based on sales of a wide variety of goods and some services, and change with the state's economic cycles.

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 4 amends s. 202.18, F.S., to redirect the 30 percent portion of direct-to-home satellite service tax from the Local Government Half-cent Sales Tax Trust Fund to the General Revenue Fund.

Section 5 amends s. 212.20, F.S., to create a new sales tax distribution for fiscally constrained counties. The new distribution is the greater of \$50 million or 0.1438 percent of available sales tax proceeds.

Section 7 amends s. 218.67, F.S., to replace the fiscally constrained county distribution factors discussed in the present situation with:

- The contribution-to-revenue factor. This factor is calculated by dividing the county's population by the sales tax collections attributable to the county and then multiplying by 100.
- The personal-income factor. This factor is calculated by dividing the median per capita personal income of participating counties by the county's per capita personal income.

Each county's proportional allocation of the newly created sales tax distribution must be the same proportion as the sum of the county's two new factors is to the sum of the two factors for all eligible counties. The bill also adds a requirement that the proportional rate computation must be carried to the fifth decimal place, and the amount to distribute to each county must be rounded to the next whole dollar amount.

The money distributed pursuant to this section must be allocated as follows: 50% of the distribution may be used for public safety, including for salaries for law enforcement, correctional officers, firefighters, emergency medical technicians, or paramedics, 30% may be used for infrastructure, and 20% may be used for any public purpose. Debt service is not allowed.

The bill removes the provision for a county to be classified as fiscally constrained if the county is entirely within a rural area of opportunity. It also increases the revenue qualification from where a 1-mill levy would raise no more than \$10 million, which is an increase from \$5 million.

⁹¹ Florida Department of Revenue, Office of Tax Research, General Tax Distributions, Forms 5 and 6, <https://floridarevenue.com/DataPortal/Pages/TaxResearch.aspx> (last visited Feb. 6, 2025).

⁹² Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research, *2023 and 2024 Florida Tax Handbooks*, <https://edr.state.fl.us/content/revenues/reports/tax-handbook/> (last visited Feb. 6, 2025).

*Effect of Proposed Changes:***Rural Communities Report**

Section 8 amends s. 288.0001, F.S., to require OPPAGA and the Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR) to prepare a report on the impact of Florida Statutes on rural communities. Specifically, the two entities must review definitions in the Florida Statutes of terms such as “rural community,” “rural area of opportunity,” and similar terms used to define rural areas of the state to assess whether the current definitions are appropriate, whether appropriate metrics are used to describe these communities and if statutory changes are needed. OPPAGA and the EDR must also survey rural local governments to evaluate the statutory advantages of qualifying as rural local government and assess perceived unmet needs in the implementation of current statutory provisions designed to support rural communities.

OPPAGA and the EDR must submit a report and recommendations to President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by December 31, 2025. These provisions expire on July 1, 2026.

*Present Situation:***State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) Program**

The SHIP Program was created in 1992⁹³ to provide funds to local governments as an incentive to create partnerships that produce and preserve affordable homeownership and multifamily housing. The SHIP program provides funds to all 67 counties and 52 Community Development Block Grant⁹⁴ entitlement cities on a population-based formula to finance and preserve affordable housing based on locally adopted housing plans.⁹⁵ The program was designed to serve very-low, low-, and moderate-income families and is administered by Florida Housing Finance Corporation (FHFC). SHIP funds may be used to pay for emergency repairs, rehabilitation, down payment and closing cost assistance, impact fees, construction and gap financing, mortgage buydowns, acquisition of property for affordable housing, matching dollars for federal housing grants and programs, and homeownership counseling.⁹⁶

Funds are expended per each local government’s adopted Local Housing Assistance Plan (LHAP), which details the housing strategies it will use.⁹⁷ Local governments submit their LHAPs to the FHFC for review to ensure that they meet the broad statutory guidelines and the requirements of the program rules. The guaranteed minimum allocation amount that will be disbursed on a quarterly or more frequent basis by the FHFC to local governments is \$350,000.⁹⁸

⁹³ Chapter 92-317, Laws of Fla.

⁹⁴ The CDBG program is a federal program created in 1974 that provides funding for housing and community development activities.

⁹⁵ See ss. 420.907-420.9089, F.S.

⁹⁶ Section 420.9072(7), F.S.

⁹⁷ Section 420.9075, F.S. Section 420.9075(3), F.S., outlines a list of strategies LHAPs are encouraged to employ, such as helping those affected by mobile home park closures, encouraging innovative housing design to reduce long-term housing costs, preserving assisted housing, and reducing homelessness.

⁹⁸ Section 420.9073 (3)(a-b) F.S.

Certain statutory requirements restrict a local government's use of funds made available under the SHIP program (excluding amounts set aside for administrative costs):

- At least 75 percent of SHIP funds must be reserved for construction, rehabilitation, or emergency repair of affordable, eligible housing;⁹⁹ and
- Up to 25 percent of SHIP funds may be reserved for allowed rental services.¹⁰⁰

Within those distributions by local governments, additional requirements must be met:

- At least 65 percent of SHIP funds must be reserved for home ownership for eligible persons;¹⁰¹
- At least 20 percent of SHIP funds must serve persons with special needs;¹⁰²
- Up to 20 percent of SHIP funds may be used for manufactured housing;¹⁰³ and
- At least 30 percent of SHIP funds must be used for awards to very-low-income persons or eligible sponsors serving very-low-income persons, and another 30 percent must be used for awards for low-income-persons or eligible sponsors serving low-income persons.¹⁰⁴

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 34 amends s. 420.9073, F.S., to increase the minimum SHIP allocation from \$350,000 to \$1 million.

Present Situation:

USDA Section 515 Rural Affordable Housing

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Section 515 program, which has existed since the 1960s, is a part of the national Rural Rental Housing program. Many of rural America's 65 million residents experience acute housing problems with nearly 30 percent of rural households experience at least one major housing problem, such as high cost, physical deficiencies, or overcrowding.¹⁰⁵

Under the Section 515 program, USDA Rural Development makes direct loans to developers to finance affordable multifamily rental housing for very low-income, low-income, and moderate-income families, for elderly people, and for persons with disabilities. Section 515 loans have an interest rate of 1%, amortized over 50 years, to finance modest rental or cooperatively-owned housing.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹ Section 420.9075(5)(c), F.S.

¹⁰⁰ Section 420.9075(5)(b), F.S. However, a local government may not expend money distributed to it to provide ongoing rent subsidies, except for: security and utility deposit assistance; eviction prevention not to exceed six months' rent; or a rent subsidy program for very-low-income households with at least one adult who is a person with special needs or is homeless, not to exceed 12 months' rental assistance.

¹⁰¹ Section 420.9075(5)(a), F.S. "Eligible person" or "eligible household" means one or more natural persons or a family determined by the county or eligible municipality to be of very low income, low income, or moderate income based upon the annual gross income of the household.

¹⁰² Section 420.9075(5)(d), F.S.

¹⁰³ Section 420.9075(5)(e), F.S.

¹⁰⁴ Section 420.9075(5)(g)2., F.S.

¹⁰⁵ National Low Income Housing Coalition, *USDA Rural Rental Housing Programs*. Available at https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/AG-2019/04-13_USDA-Rural-Rental-Housing-Programs.pdf (last visited Jan. 27, 2025)

¹⁰⁶ *Id.*

Section 515 funds can be used for any new construction and for the rehabilitation of existing rural properties. Funding can also be used to buy or improve land, and to provide critical infrastructure for properties such as water and waste disposal systems. However, no new rental properties have been developed under Section 515 since 2011.¹⁰⁷

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 35 amends s. 420.9075, F.S., to supersede statutory restrictions on the use of SHIP funds to allow counties and municipalities to use up to 25 percent of their SHIP funds to preserve existing multifamily affordable rental housing financed with USDA loans. This provision expires on June 30, 2031.

Section 48 appropriates \$30 million in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund to the Florida Housing Finance Corporation (FHFC) to preserve affordable multifamily rental housing funded through USDA loans. Funds must be used to issue competitive requests for application for the rehabilitation or acquisition of such properties to ensure continued affordability.

By October 1, 2026, the FHFC must submit a report to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives on projects funded pursuant to this section. The report must include the number of units preserved and the financing portfolio for each project.

Present Situation:

FDOT Support to Local Governments

The FDOT provides funding and support to Florida's cities and counties through a variety of local programs. For example, the Local Agency Program provides local governments with federal funds to develop, design, and construct transportation facilities.¹⁰⁸ The FDOT administers these funds on behalf of the Federal Highway Administration. There are also a number of state-sponsored programs designed to assist local governments, including:

- County Incentive Grant Program which provides grants to counties to improve transportation facilities located on the State Highway System or that relieve traffic congestion on the State Highway System;¹⁰⁹
- Transportation Regional Incentive Program which provides funds to improve regionally significant transportation facilities in certain regional transportation areas;¹¹⁰
- Small County Road Assistance Program which assist small county governments in resurfacing or reconstructing county roads;¹¹¹ and
- Small County Outreach Program which assist small county governments in repairing or rehabilitating county bridges, paving unpaved roads, addressing road-related drainage improvements, resurfacing or reconstructing county roads.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ *Id.*

¹⁰⁸ Section 339.28201, F.S.

¹⁰⁹ Section 339.2817, F.S.

¹¹⁰ Section 339.2819, F.S.

¹¹¹ Section 339.2816, F.S.

¹¹² Section 339.2818, F.S.

Additionally, FDOT coordinates directly with Florida's non-metropolitan, rural local governments, those located outside of a designated metropolitan planning area, to address their transportation planning and programming needs.

Small County Road Programs

Small County Road Assistance Program (SCRAP)

The FDOT administers the SCRAP to assist small county governments in resurfacing or reconstructing county roads that were part of the county road system on June 10, 1995.¹¹³ Counties eligible to compete for funding based on population include those with a population of 75,000 or less according to the 1990 federal census. Under this criteria there are currently 33 counties eligible to receive funding through the program. Capacity improvements on county roads are not eligible for the SCRAP funding, except where the FDOT determines that widening existing lanes as part of a resurfacing or reconstruction project is necessary to address safety concerns.¹¹⁴

Currently, up to \$25 million annually from the State Transportation Trust Fund may be used to fund the SCRAP.¹¹⁵ Available funds are allocated to the FDOT districts based on the number of counties eligible for funding under the criteria in s. 339.2816, F.S. The table below summarizes the SCRAP funding in the fiscal year 2025/2026 – 2029/2030 FDOT work program.

SCRAP Funding – FY 2025-2029¹¹⁶					
2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Total
\$26,854,023	\$25,000,001	\$25,000,001	\$25,000,001	\$25,000,001	\$126,854,027

Small County Outreach Program (SCOP)

The SCOP assists small counties in repairing or rehabilitating county bridges, paving unpaved roads, addressing road-related drainage improvements, resurfacing or reconstructing county roads, or constructing capacity or safety improvements to county roads. Small counties eligible to compete for project funding include those with a population of 200,000 or less as determined by the most recent official estimate of the Office of Economic and Demographic Research.¹¹⁷ Similar to the SCRAP, available funds are allocated to the FDOT districts based on the number of counties eligible for funding under the criteria in s. 339.2818, F.S. The table below summarizes the SCOP funding in the fiscal year 2025/2026 – 2029/2030 FDOT work program.

SCOP Funding – FY 2025 to FY 2029¹¹⁸						
	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Total
SCOP	\$95,741,476	\$80,852,739	\$79,674,999	\$79,560,002	\$79,345,001	\$415,174,217

¹¹³ Section 339.2816(4), F.S.

¹¹⁴ FDOT, *Work Program Instructions FY 25/26-29/30*, September 6, 2024, at p. 394, available at <https://fdotewp1.dot.state.fl.us/fmsupportapps/Documents/development/WorkProgramInstructions.pdf>

¹¹⁵ Section 339.2816(3), F.S.

¹¹⁶ FDOT, *County Programs FY 2025-2030*, available...

¹¹⁷ Section 339.2818, F.S.

¹¹⁸ FDOT, *County Programs FY 2025-2030*, available...

The FDOT is required to fund 75 percent of the cost of projects on county roads selected for funding under the program and the county must provide 25 percent of such costs.¹¹⁹ Rural counties qualifying under the Rural Economic Development Initiative¹²⁰ may apply for a waiver or reduction of the required 25 percent local match.¹²¹ Subject to specific appropriation, municipalities within a rural area of opportunity may also compete for funding at up to 100 percent of the project costs.¹²²

In 2024, the SCOP was amended to incorporate additional eligibility provisions. Specifically, subject to a specific appropriation, a local government either wholly or partially within the Everglades Agricultural Area, the Peace River Basin, or the Suwannee River Basin may compete for additional funding at up to 100 percent of project costs on state or county roads used primarily as farm-to-market connections between rural agricultural areas and market distribution centers, excluding capacity improvement projects.¹²³

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 25 amends s. 334.044, F.S., relating to the powers and duties of the FDOT, to specifically authorize the department to provide technical assistance and support to counties that are not located in a metropolitan planning organization created pursuant to s. 339.175, F.S.

Section 26 amends s. 339.0801, F.S., to provide that certain funds that result from the increased revenue to the State Transportation Trust Fund derived pursuant to s. 319.32(5), F.S.,¹²⁴ must be used annually, beginning in the fiscal year 2025-2026, to support the Small County Road Assistance Program (SCRAP). This provision effectively increases funding for the SCRAP by approximately \$35 million annually.

Sections 27 and 30 amends ss. 339.2816, F.S., and creates an undesignated section of Florida law, respectively, to provide that FDOT must fund \$25 million annually for the SCRAP.¹²⁵ The bill directs the FDOT, beginning in fiscal year 2025-2026, to utilize the additional revenues allocated by s. 339.0801, F.S., for the SCRAP. Finally, the bill codifies current provisions in the FDOT work program instructions which prohibit the use of funds for capacity improvements unless a safety issue exists or FDOT finds it necessary to widen existing lanes as part of a resurfacing or reconstruction project.

Section 28 amends s. 339.2818, F.S., relating to the Small County Outreach Program (SCOP) to remove obsolete statutory provisions and correct cross-references. Similarly, the bill revises the SCOP funding eligibility requirements to repeal an existing category for certain local governments located within the Everglades Agricultural Area or designated river basins.

¹¹⁹ Section 339.2818(4)(a), F.S.

¹²⁰ See s. 288.056, F.S., for a full description of the Rural Economic Development Initiative.

¹²¹ *Supra* note 9 at page 384.

¹²² Section 339.2818(7), F.S.

¹²³ Section 339.2818(8), F.S.

¹²⁴ Chapter 2012-128, Laws of Fla., amended s. 319.32(5), F.S., to redirect motor vehicle title fee revenues from general revenue to the State Transportation Trust Fund.

¹²⁵ Section 339.2816(3), F.S., currently provides that "...up to \$25 million annually from the State Transportation Trust Fund may be used for purposes of funding the Small County Road Assistance Program".

*Present Situation:***Arterial Roads**

Under Florida’s Transportation Code “arterial road” means a route providing service which is relatively continuous and of relatively high traffic volume, long average trip length, high operating speed, and high mobility importance.¹²⁶ Arterials include U.S. numbered highways and principal state roads that connect cities and towns. The FDOT’s Functional Classification system distinguishes between urban and rural designations for arterial roads.¹²⁷ The FDOT routinely manages and improves arterial roads to increase capacity and facilitate traffic throughput, while at the same time achieving the paramount goal of improving safety.

In 2021, the Legislature repealed the Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (M-CORES) program and created several new initiatives related to arterial highway projects.¹²⁸ For example, the FDOT is required to identify and include in the work program projects to increase capacity by widening existing two-lane arterial rural roads to four lanes. To be included in a work program project, the road must be classified as an arterial rural road, and truck traffic using the road must amount to at least 15 percent of all such traffic, as determined by the department. The FDOT is required to fund at least \$20 million annually for such projects.¹²⁹

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Sections 3 and 29 amend ss. 201.15 and 339.68, F.S., respectively, to repeal the current provisions relating to arterial roads and create the Florida Arterial Road Modernization (FARM) Program. The purpose of the program is to make capacity and safety improvements to two-lane arterial roads located in rural communities.¹³⁰ Beginning in fiscal year 2025-2026, the FDOT is directed to allocate from the State Transportation Trust Fund a minimum of \$50 million annually to fund the program. This includes an additional \$30 million redirected by the bill from documentary stamp taxes revenues into the State Transportation Trust Fund¹³¹ and the \$20 million currently required to be allocated to the existing rural arterial road program.

The FDOT is directed to use the following criteria to prioritize projects for funding under the program:

- Whether the road has documented safety concerns or requires additional safety and design improvements. This may be evidenced by the number of fatalities or crashes per vehicle mile traveled.
- Whether the road has or is projected to have a significant amount of truck tractor traffic as determined by FDOT.
- Whether the road is used to transport agricultural products and commodities from the farm to the market or other sale or distribution point.

¹²⁶ Section 334.03(1), F.S.

¹²⁷ FDOT, *2020 Urban Area Boundary and Functional Classification Handbook*,

https://fdotwww.blob.core.windows.net/sitefinity/docs/default-source/statistics/docs/urbanfunclass.pdf?sfvrsn=84c718c4_15

¹²⁸ Chapter 2021-161, Laws of Fla.

¹²⁹ Section 339.68, F.S.

¹³⁰ For purposes of the program “rural community” has the same meaning as provided in s. 288.0656, F.S.

¹³¹ The bill amends s. 201.15, F.S., to specify that \$30 million in documentary stamp taxes must be paid to the credit of the State Transportation Trust Fund and used exclusively for the FARM Program.

- Whether the road is used to transport goods to or from warehouses, distribution centers, or intermodal logistics centers.
- Whether the road is used as an evacuation route.
- Whether the physical condition of the road meets department standards.
- Whether the road has, or is projected to have within the next five years, a level of service of D, E, or F.
- Any other criteria related to the impact of a project on the public road system or on the state or local economy as determined by FDOT.

Beginning January 1, 2027, and every two years thereafter, the FDOT must issue a report to the Governor, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives evaluating the condition of arterial roads in rural communities and the implementation of the FARM Program.

Present Situation:

Rural Health Care

Data on Patient Outcomes

Studies continue to highlight health disparities between patient outcomes in rural and non-rural areas. Recent data indicates that rural Americans are at 30 percent higher risk of stroke, 40 percent more likely to develop heart disease, and live an average of three years fewer than urban counterparts.¹³²

A study published by the CDC in 2021 indicated a stroke treatment disparity in Florida, favoring urban counties with more primary stroke centers than rural counties.¹³³ Stroke death rates appear to be in correlation.¹³⁴ The study recommended the use of telemedicine for stroke treatment to reduce the disparity, listing availability and affordability as a potential constraint.¹³⁵

A review of the CDC Pregnancy Mortality Surveillance System found pregnancy-related mortality ratios from 2011 to 2016 were highest in rural areas (19.5-24.4 deaths per 100,000), as compared to urban areas (15.7-17.9 deaths per 100,000). In the year following a hospital's closure of a labor and delivery unit in rural and urban-adjacent counties, out-of-hospital births and preterm births increase, putting more pressure on rural emergency management system (EMS) staff and volunteers to be prepared for obstetrical emergencies.¹³⁶

¹³² American Heart Association, *Rural Health Initiative*, available <https://www.heart.org/en/professional/quality-improvement/rural-healthcare-outcomes-accelerator> (last visited Feb. 24, 2025). Marinacci, L, Zheng, Z, Mein, S. et al. Rural-Urban Differences in Cardiovascular Mortality in the United States, 2010-2022. *JACC*. 2025 Jan, 85 (1) 93–97, available at <https://www.jacc.org/doi/full/10.1016/j.jacc.2024.09.1215> (last visited Feb. 24, 2025).

¹³³ Centers for Disease Control, *Examining Stroke Disparities in Florida: Relationships Among County Classification, Age-Adjusted Stroke Mortality Rates, and the Presence of Primary Stroke Centers*, June 10, 2021, available at https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2021/20_0561.htm#References (last visited Feb. 24, 2025).

¹³⁴ *Id.*

¹³⁵ *Id.*

¹³⁶ National Rural Health Association, *Maternal Health in Rural America White Paper*, February 2024, available at [https://www.ruralhealth.us/nationalruralhealth/media/documents/maternal-health-in-rural-america-white-paper-final-\(1\).pdf](https://www.ruralhealth.us/nationalruralhealth/media/documents/maternal-health-in-rural-america-white-paper-final-(1).pdf) (last visited Feb. 24, 2025). Kozhimannil, K. B., Hung, P., Henning-Smith, C., Casey, M. M., & Prasad, S. (2018).

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 32 creates s. 381.9856, F.S., to establish the Stroke, Cardiac, and Obstetric Response and Education (SCORE) Grant Program within the Department of Health (DOH) for the purpose of improving patient outcomes and the coordination of emergency medical care in rural communities. The DOH is required to award grants, in amounts of no more than \$100,000 per year, to high risk providers¹³⁷ serving rural communities to:

- Implement a blended learning training program for health care providers in stroke care protocols and best practices.
- Purchase simulation equipment and technology for training.
- Establish telehealth capabilities between pre-hospital providers, such as paramedics or emergency medical technicians, and in-hospital providers, such as neurologists, to expedite emergency stroke care, emergency cardiac care, or emergency obstetric care.
- Develop quality improvement programs in one or more of the following specialty areas: emergency stroke care, emergency cardiac care, or emergency obstetric care.

The DOH must give priority to SCORE proposals that demonstrate collaboration between pre-hospital and in-hospital providers or show potential for significant improvement in patient outcomes in rural communities. Grant recipients must submit quarterly reports to the DOH, which must include program activities, expenditures, and outcomes. The DOH is also tasked with monitoring implementation and outcomes. The DOH must submit an annual report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by December 1 of each year. The DOH may adopt rules to implement the grant program. The grant program may be implemented only to the extent that it is specifically funded. The program stands repealed on July 1, 2030, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through enactment by the Legislature.

*Present Situation:***Rural Health Disparities**

Access to timely health care services has been a long-standing issue for rural communities. There are many barriers to care that make access difficult in rural communities, including health care workforce shortages, higher poverty rates and lower insurance coverage rates, and longer distances to health care facilities compared to urban residents.¹³⁸ One major issue in providing sufficient care in rural communities is a lack of providers. A report from the United States Department of Health and Human Services: Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) shows fewer health care providers in rural areas over multiple license types.¹³⁹ For

Association Between Loss of Hospital-Based Obstetric Services and Birth Outcomes in Rural Counties in the United States. *JAMA*, 319(12), 1239–1247, available at <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29522161/> (last visited Feb. 24, 2025).

¹³⁷ The bill defines the term “high-risk care provider” as a licensed health care facility or licensed ambulance service that regularly provides emergency or ongoing care to patients experiencing a stroke, heart attack, or pregnancy-related emergency.

¹³⁸ Access to Specialty Care for Medicare Beneficiaries in Rural Communities, Lahr, Megan et. al., University of Minnesota Rural Health Research Center, 2019, available at https://rsrc.umn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/UMN-Access-to-Specialty-Care_12.4.pdf (last visited Feb. 24, 2025).

¹³⁹ Distribution of U.S. Health Care Providers Residing in Rural and Urban Areas, United States Department of Health and Human Services: Health Resources and Services Administration, available at United States Department of Health and Human Services: Health Resources and Services Administration, (last visited Feb. 24, 2025).

example, at the time of the study there were 13.1 physicians/surgeons per 10k residents in rural areas compared with 31.2 in urban areas, 3 psychologists per 10k residents in rural areas compared with 6.8 in urban areas, 2.3 physician assistants per 10k residents in rural areas compared with 3.4 in urban areas, and 85.3 registered nurses per 10k residents in rural areas compared with 93.5 in urban areas.¹⁴⁰

About 20 percent of Americans live in rural areas, but barely one-tenth of physicians practice there. The federal government projects a shortage of over 20,000 primary care physicians in rural areas by 2025. Primary care physicians in rural areas often do not have the support of sub-specialists, hospitalists, or emergency physicians, and thus treat a wider range of conditions with limited access to sophisticated technology. Most are required to admit and take care of patients in community-based hospitals, many of which are gravitating toward an emergency room and short-stay models of care, moving more complex patients to larger medical centers.¹⁴¹ A lack of primary care has been shown to have a direct impact on mortality rates with an increase in 10 primary care physicians per 100,000 population correlating with an 51.5-day increase in life expectancy.¹⁴²

Another barrier to accessing health care in rural areas is lack of reliable transportation and the need to travel long distances to find practitioners. Rural areas can also lack public transportation options and have poor road conditions which make it more difficult to travel to find health care.¹⁴³ Rural populations most likely to need transportation services to maintain their health and well-being include:

- Older adults;
- People with disabilities;
- Low-income individuals and families;
- Veterans; and
- People with special healthcare needs, who often must travel long distances to access care.¹⁴⁴

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 31 creates s. 381.403, F.S., to establish the Rural Access to Primary and Preventive Care (RAPP-C) Grant Program. The bill provides legislative findings that primary and preventative care is critical for the well-being of the residents of Florida and that rural areas have significantly fewer physicians and autonomous ARNPs. The bill defines the terms:

- “Autonomous advanced practice registered nurse” to mean an advanced practice registered nurse who is registered under s. 464.0123, F.S., to engage in autonomous practice.

¹⁴⁰ Id. p. 2

¹⁴¹ Nielsen M, D'Agostino D, Gregory P. Addressing Rural Health Challenges Head On. *Mo Med.* 2017 Sep-Oct;114(5):363-366. PMID: 30228634; PMCID: PMC6140198. Available at https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6140198/#b3-ms114_p0363 (last visited Feb. 25, 2025).

¹⁴² Basu S, Berkowitz SA, Phillips RL, Bitton A, Landon BE, Phillips RS. Association of Primary Care Physician Supply With Population Mortality in the United States, 2005-2015. *JAMA Intern Med.* 2019;179(4):506–514. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2018.7624, available at <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/2724393> (last visited Feb. 25, 2025).

¹⁴³ Rural Health Disparities, Rural Health Information Hub, available at <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/rural-health-disparities#causes>, (last visited Feb. 25, 2025).

¹⁴⁴ Transportation to Support Rural Healthcare, Rural Health Information Hub, available at <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/transportation>, (last visited Feb. 25, 2025).

- “Majority ownership” to mean ownership of more than 50 percent of the interests in a private practice.
- “Physician” to mean a physician licensed under chs. 458 or 459, F.S.
- “Preventive care” to mean routine health care services designed to prevent illness. The term includes, but is not limited to, general physical examinations provided on an annual basis, screenings for acute or chronic illnesses, and patient counseling to promote overall wellness and avoid the need for emergency services.
- “Primary care” to mean health care services focused primarily on preventive care, wellness care, and treatment for common illnesses. The term may include the health care provider serving as a patient’s entry point into the overall health care system and coordinating a patient’s care among specialists or acute care settings. The term does not include elective services provided solely for cosmetic purposes.
- “Program” to mean the RAPP-C grant program.
- “Qualifying rural area” to mean a rural community as defined in s. 288.0657, F.S. in this state which is also designated as a health professional shortage area by the HRSA.

The bill requires the DOH to award grants under the RAPP-C to physicians and autonomous ARNPs who intend to open a new private practice in a qualifying rural area or to open a new location within a qualifying rural area that is in a different county from their current practice. In order to qualify, the practice must:

- Have majority ownership by physicians or autonomous ARNPs. Majority ownership may include up to five physicians or autonomous advanced practice registered nurses in partnership.
- Be physically located in a qualifying rural area and serve patients who live in that qualifying rural area or in other nearby qualifying rural areas. While the practice may use telehealth to supplement the services provided at the location, the majority of services provided by the practice must be provided at the physical location.
- Accept Medicaid patients.
- Provide services in one or more of the following specialties:
 - If the practice has majority ownership by one or more autonomous advanced practice registered nurses, provide services solely in primary or preventive care.
 - If the practice has majority ownership by one or more physicians, provide services in primary care, obstetrics, gynecology, general and family practice, geriatrics, internal medicine, pediatrics, or psychiatry.

Additionally, the owners of the practice must commit to providing deidentified patient encounter data and a detailed report of the use of grant funds to the DOH on an annual basis.

By March 1, 2026, the DOH is required to create an application process for the RAPP-C which requires the applicant to provide a detailed budget of the anticipated use of grant funds and how the practice will meet the above requirements. The DOH is required to establish a ranking system to determine which applicants will be awarded grants if there are more applicants for the program than can be awarded grants with appropriated funds.

Subject to appropriation, the DOH may award up to \$250,000 to eligible applicants which may be used for the following expenses:

- Facility construction, acquisition, renovation, or lease.
- Purchasing medical equipment.
- Purchasing or implementing information technology equipment or services.
- Purchasing or implementing telehealth technology.
- Training on the use of medical equipment, information technology, or telehealth technology implemented under paragraph (b), paragraph (c), or paragraph (d), respectively.

The bill specifies that grant funds may not be used for:

- Salaries.
- Utilities.
- Internet or telecommunications services other than those necessary for implementing telehealth technology.
- Insurance.
- Incidental maintenance and repairs.
- Disposable medical supplies.
- Medicines or vaccines.
- Licensing or certification fees, including costs for continuing education other than training specified above.

Only one grant may be awarded per practice and the bill requires the DOH to enter into a contract with each grant recipient which details the requirements for the expenditure of grant funds for that recipient and must include:

- The purpose of the contract.
- Specific performance standards and responsibilities for the recipient under the contract, including penalties for not meeting such performance standards and responsibilities.

Section 49 appropriates \$25 million in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund to the DOH to implement the RAPP-C grant program. Grant funds will be awarded over a 5-year period.

Present Situation:

Rural Hospital Capital Improvement (RHCI) Grant Program

Section 395.6061, F.S., establishes the RHCI grant program. The program is available to rural hospitals¹⁴⁵ that apply and guarantee, subject to appropriation, at least \$100,000 per hospital to fund projects to acquire, repair, improve, or upgrade systems, facilities and equipment. Between

¹⁴⁵ A rural hospital is defined in s. 395.602, F.S., to include an acute care hospital licensed under this chapter, having 100 or fewer licensed beds and an emergency room, which is: the sole provider within a county with a population density of up to 100 persons per square mile; an acute care hospital, in a county with a population density of up to 100 persons per square mile, which is at least 30 minutes of travel time, on normally traveled roads under normal traffic conditions, from any other acute care hospital within the same county; a hospital supported by a tax district or subdistrict whose boundaries encompass a population of up to 100 persons per square mile; a hospital classified as a sole community hospital under 42 C.F.R. s. 412.92, regardless of the number of licensed beds; a hospital with a service area that has a population of up to 100 persons per square mile; or a hospital designated as a critical access hospital, as defined in s. 408.07. According to Florida Health Finder, there are 24 rural hospitals in Florida.

fiscal years 2023-2025 the grant program has helped to fund numerous improvement projects at rural hospitals including, but not limited to:

- Adding a third chiller at AdventHealth Palm Coast;
- Purchasing a leased building which houses a rural health clinic by AdventHealth Wachula;
- Replacing nuclear medicine camera equipment and upgrading and refreshing patient rooms and air conditioning at Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast;
- Replacing the air conditioning system at Doctors' Memorial Hospital in Bonifay; and
- Renovating emergency department space at Doctors' Memorial Hospital in Perry and Ed Fraser Memorial Hospital in Mcclenny.¹⁴⁶

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 33 amends s. 395.6061, F.S., to expand the RHCI grant program to allow rural hospitals to use grant funds to establish mobile care units to provide primary care, behavioral health, or obstetric and gynecologic services in a rural health professional shortage area; or to establish telehealth kiosks to provide urgent and primary care services remotely in rural health professional shortage areas. The bill defines:

- “Preventive care” to mean routine health care services designed to prevent illness. The term includes, but is not limited to, general physical examinations provided on an annual basis, screenings for acute or chronic illnesses, and patient counseling to promote overall wellness and avoid the need for emergency services.
- “Primary care” to mean health care services focused primarily on preventive care, wellness care, and treatment for common illnesses. The term may include the health care provider serving as a patient’s entry point into the overall health care system and coordinating a patient’s care among specialists or acute care settings. The term does not include elective services provided solely for cosmetic purposes.
- “Rural health professional shortage area” to mean a rural community as defined in s. 288.0657, F.S., which is also designated as a health professional shortage area by the HRSA.

Section 51 appropriates \$25 million in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund are appropriated in fixed capital outlay to DOH for the purpose of implementing the rural hospital capital improvement grant program

Present Situation:

Regional Educational Consortia

School districts with 20,000 or fewer students, developmental research (laboratory) schools, and the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind may enter into cooperative agreements to form a regional consortium service organization (regional consortium).¹⁴⁷ Regional consortium service organizations (regional consortia) are intended to provide programs and services to small school

¹⁴⁶ A full list of all projects is on file with Senate Health Policy Committee staff.

¹⁴⁷ Section 1001.451(1), F.S.

districts to save money, increase student achievement, and improve organizational efficiency via economies of scale and collaboration.¹⁴⁸

There are three regional consortia: the Heartland Educational Consortium (HEC),¹⁴⁹ the North East Regional Consortium (NEFEC),¹⁵⁰ and the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC).¹⁵¹ Florida's Regional Consortia members include 36 school districts, 430 schools, 12,000 teachers, and 160,000 students.¹⁵²

Each regional consortium must provide, at a minimum, three of the following services: exceptional student education; teacher education centers; environmental education; federal grant procurement and coordination; data processing; health insurance; risk management insurance; staff development; purchasing; or planning and accountability.¹⁵³ Each regional consortium receives an incentive grant of \$50,000 per school district and eligible member to be used for the delivery of services within the participating school districts. The determination of services and use of such funds is determined by the board of directors of the regional consortium.¹⁵⁴

The board of directors of a regional consortium may use various means to generate revenue in support of its activities, which may include patents, copyrights, and trademarks and licenses. Such funds must be used to support the organization's marketing and research and development activities in order to improve and increase services to its member districts.¹⁵⁵

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Sections 36 amends s. 1001.451, F.S., to expand services, incentive grants, and authority over the use of funds by regional consortium service organizations (regional consortia). The bill authorizes the regional consortia boards of directors to determine the number of services to offer, and adds to those services safe schools support; state grant procurement; professional learning; college, career, and workforce development; and business and operational services.

The bill increases the allocation to the regional consortia from \$50,000 per member to \$150,000 per member. Each regional consortium must submit quarterly financial reports to members, and an annual report to the Department of Education regarding the use of funds for consortia

¹⁴⁸ Heartland Educational Consortium, North East Florida Educational Consortium, Panhandle Area Educational Consortium, *Florida's Regional Consortia*, Presentation to the Florida Senate Committee on Education Pre-K - 12 (Feb. 4, 2025), available at (https://www.flsenate.gov/Committees/Show/ED/MeetingPacket/6290/10954_MeetingPacket_6290_2.pdf), at 6.

¹⁴⁹ HEC serves six member districts: DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, and Okeechobee.

¹⁵⁰ NEFEC serves 13 member districts: Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Flagler, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Nassau, Putnam, Suwannee, and Union. NEFEC also serves the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind and the P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School.

¹⁵¹ PAEC serves 13 member districts: Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Liberty, Madison, Taylor, Wakulla, Walton, Washington. PAEC also serves the FSU Collegiate School and FAMU Developmental Research School.

¹⁵² Heartland Educational Consortium, North East Florida Educational Consortium, Panhandle Area Educational Consortium, *Florida's Regional Consortia*, Presentation to the Florida Senate Committee on Education Pre-K - 12 (Feb. 4, 2025), available at (https://www.flsenate.gov/Committees/Show/ED/MeetingPacket/6290/10954_MeetingPacket_6290_2.pdf), at 6.

¹⁵³ Section 1001.451(1), F.S.

¹⁵⁴ Section 1001.451(2), F.S.

¹⁵⁵ Section 1001.451(5), F.S.

services. Of the allocation, the bill specifies that unexpended amounts must be carried forward into the approved operating budget for the following year.

The bill codifies current practice that a member district must serve as the fiscal agent for regional consortium contractual and reporting purposes. The bill specifies compensation to the fiscal agent and to each regional consortium for activities. Employees of the regional consortium are employees of the fiscal agent district; the regional consortium recommends appointments to the fiscal agent and recommends a salary schedule and job description for its personnel. However, the bill authorizes the regional consortium to purchase or lease property and facilities independent of the fiscal agent district.

The bill increases the alternate revenue sources for a regional consortium board of directors to include contracting for services to nonmember school districts. Of these additional funds, the bill removes the requirement that all such additional funds be used for development and marketing; the bill authorizes the board of directors to determine fund use. These funds may be carried forward for maintaining or expanding services, facilities maintenance, terminal pay, and other liabilities.

Finally, the bill authorizes each regional consortium to administer the Regional Consortia Service Organization Supplemental Services Program.

Section 54 appropriates \$3.6 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund to DOE to fund the increased grant allocations for regional consortia, pursuant to section 36 of the bill..

Section 37 creates s. 1001.4511, F.S., to establish the Regional Consortia Service Organization Supplemental Services Program (supplemental services) to provide additional resources to regional consortium service organizations for programs and services offered to members. The supplemental services funds may be used for transportation; district finance personnel services; property insurance; cybersecurity support; school safety; college, career, and workforce development; academic support; and behavior support within exceptional student education services. Each board of directors will determine the use of supplemental services funds through cooperative agreements with regional consortium members.

The bill authorizes the regional consortium to carry forward unused supplemental services funds for up to five years. The regional consortium must annually report to the Legislature on the distribution of funds and member services provided.

Section 55 appropriates \$25 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund to DOE to be distributed to regional consortium service organizations as follows:

- \$5,555,149 to the Heartland Educational Consortium;
- \$11,912,923 to the North East Florida Educational Consortium;
- and \$7,531,928 to the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium.

The funds must be distributed to each regional consortium service organization no later than 30 days following the release of the funds to the department.

*Present Situation:***Instructional Personnel in Rural Districts**

Schools, especially those with inadequate resources, can experience difficulty hiring teachers and high turnover. These issues are linked with the availability of new teachers, salaries, and working conditions.¹⁵⁶ For example, rural schools may have limited instructional staff, which necessitates recruiting teachers with multiple subject endorsements. Staff members may teach multiple subjects, multiple grades, and sometimes multi-age students within the same classroom. More-rural schools face higher transportation costs that can siphon resources away from other budget items, such as teacher salaries. Housing shortages and limited access to hospitals, banks, stores, cultural facilities, and higher education institutions may also negatively impact teacher recruitment in rural areas.¹⁵⁷ Rural communities face challenges related to competition from higher urban compensation schedules, housing shortages, and a lack of support resources commonly found in urban areas.¹⁵⁸

In 2020–21, a higher percentage of schools in rural areas than of schools in cities and suburban areas found it very difficult or not possible to fill teaching vacancies in foreign languages, English or language arts, social studies, mathematics, biology or life sciences, music or art, and physical education or health.¹⁵⁹

Also in 2020–21, more than 20 percent of private schools in rural areas that had teaching vacancies in specific fields found it very difficult to fill or were not able to fill vacancies in the physical education or health, special education, computer science, mathematics, foreign languages, physical sciences, and biology or life sciences.¹⁶⁰

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 38 creates s. 1009.635, F.S., to establish the Rural Incentive for Professional Educators (RIPE) program within the Office of Student Financial Assistance in the Department of Education (DOE). In order to support the recruitment and retention of qualified instructional personnel in rural communities, the RIPE program provides up to \$15,000 in total student loan repayment assistance over 5 years, disbursed in annual payments up to \$3,000 per year.

¹⁵⁶ National Center for Education Statistics, *Difficulty Hiring Teachers in Rural Areas*, <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/llc> (last visited Feb. 25, 2025).

¹⁵⁷ Principal’s Research Review, *Recruiting and Retaining Rural Educators: Challenges and Strategies* (v. 7, Issue 6, Nov. 2012) available at <https://nisnresourcehub.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Recruiting-and-Retaining-Rural-Educators-Challenges-and-Strategies.pdf>, at 2.

¹⁵⁸ EdSource, *Rural counties far from universities struggle to recruit teachers*, <https://edsources.org/2024/rural-counties-far-from-universities-struggle-to-recruit-teachers/710566#:~:text=Rural%20teachers%20scarce,candidates%2C%20according%20to%20the%20study> (last visited Feb. 26, 2025).

¹⁵⁹ National Center for Education Statistics, *Difficulty Hiring Teachers in Rural Areas*, <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/llc> (last visited Feb. 25, 2025).

¹⁶⁰ *Id.*

To be eligible for the RIPE program, an individual must:

- Establish permanent residency on or after July 1, 2025, in a rural area of opportunity. The address on a state-issued identification card or driver license is evidence of residence.
- Secure full-time employment as a teacher or administrator in a public or private school in the same district of residence.
- Hold an associate degree, bachelor's degree, postgraduate degree, or certificate from an accredited institution earned before establishing residency.
- Have an active student loan balance incurred for the completion of the qualifying degree or certificate.

Before disbursement of an award, the DOE must verify that the participant has maintained continuous enrollment in the school district in an instructional or administrative role, has a evaluation rating of effective or highly effective, and has not been subject to specified disciplinary actions.

The DOE must develop application procedures requiring documentation, including proof of residency, verification of employment, official academic transcripts, and details of outstanding student loans. The bill requires the State Board of Education to adopt rules no later than January 31, 2026, to administer the RIPE program.

Section 56 appropriates \$7 million in recurring funds from General Revenue Fund to the DOE for the RIPE Program.

Present Situation:

Special Facility Construction Accounts

The Special Facility Construction Account (SFCA) within the Department of Education is used to provide necessary construction funds to school districts that have urgent construction needs but lack sufficient resources, and cannot reasonably anticipate sufficient resources within the next 3 years.¹⁶¹ These projects typically are located in rural school districts that have an insufficient tax base to fund large construction projects. The state's smaller school districts, which serve 20,000 or fewer students, generally raise considerably less through local discretionary property taxes than larger Florida school districts. As a result, small school districts may have a difficult time raising the local funds needed to pay for new schools.¹⁶² In 2023, rural school districts that were members of regional consortium service organizations occupied ranks 36-67 in taxable values and values of the 1.5 mill discretionary levy.¹⁶³

A district that receives funds under the SFCA must, for three years prior to submitting an application for funds, and for a continuing period necessary to meet its participation requirement, levy the maximum millage against the district's nonexempt assessed property value as authorized

¹⁶¹ Section 1013.64(2)(a), F.S.

¹⁶² Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability, *Special Facility Construction Projects Appear Needed, but Have Excess Capacity* (Report 11-02, Jan. 2011) available at <https://oppaga.fl.gov/Documents/Reports/11-02.pdf>, at 1-2.

¹⁶³ Heartland Educational Consortium, North East Florida Educational Consortium, Panhandle Area Educational Consortium, *Florida's Regional Consortia*, Presentation to the Florida Senate Committee on Education Pre-K - 12 (Feb. 4, 2025), available at (https://www.flsenate.gov/Committees/Show/ED/MeetingPacket/6290/10954_MeetingPacket_6290_2.pdf), at 10.

under s. 1011.71(2) or raise an equivalent amount of revenue from the school capital outlay surtax authorized under s. 212.055(6). In addition, a district must budget the value of 1 mill per year to the project until the participation requirement¹⁶⁴ related to the discretionary capital improvement levy or capital outlay surtax is satisfied.¹⁶⁵ A district may not receive funding for more than one approved project in any 3-year period or while any portion of the district's participation requirement is outstanding.¹⁶⁶

Since 2014-2015, 16 school districts have received a total of \$1,080,133,481 from the SFCA.¹⁶⁷

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 40 amends s. 1013.64, F.S., to modify the participation requirement in s. 1013.64, F.S., for a school district that receives funds under the Special Facility Construction Account (SFCA).

The bill specifies that, for new construction projects under the SFCA, beginning in the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the district is not required to budget the value of 1 mill per year toward the project, but must use those funds toward authorized capital purchases specified in law. However, the bill maintains a requirement that the district levies the maximum 1.5 mills ad valorem tax or raise an equivalent revenue from the school capital outlay surtax for the three years prior to the application for funds, and for the initial year of appropriation plus two additional years.

Eleven school districts that have received funds since 2020-2021 under the SFCA have an outstanding participation requirement of \$111,254,828;¹⁶⁸ these districts would be required to complete the terms of the participation agreement. However, under the bill such districts with existing projects more than three years old would be eligible to apply for funds for an additional project.

Present Situation:

Charter School Capital Outlay Funding

Charter school capital outlay funding consists of state funds when such funds are appropriated in the General Appropriations Act and revenue resulting from the 1.5 mill discretionary capital improvement levy authorized in law.¹⁶⁹

If the school board levies the discretionary capital improvement millage, the Department of Education (DOE) must, when determining the amount of revenue that a school district must distribute to each eligible charter school, reduce from the total amount the total discretionary millage revenue by the school district's annual debt service obligation incurred as of March 1, 2017, which has not been subsequently retired, and any amount of participation requirement

¹⁶⁴ The participation requirement is unencumbered and future revenue from school bonds under Art. XII, s. 9(d), Fla. Const., the discretionary capital improvement levy under s. 1011.71(2), and the amounts from the Public Education Capital Outlay and Debt Service Trust Fund in the year of the initial appropriation and for the 2 years immediately following the initial appropriation. Section 1013.64(2)(a)11., F.S.

¹⁶⁵ Section 1013.64(2)(a)8., F.S.

¹⁶⁶ Section 1013.64(2)(a), F.S.

¹⁶⁷ Email, Florida Department of Education (Feb. 12, 2025).

¹⁶⁸ Email, Florida Department of Education (Feb. 12, 2025).

¹⁶⁹ Section 1013.62(1), F.S. The 1.5 mill discretionary capital improvement levy is authorized under s. 1011.71(2), F.S.

under the Special Facility Construction Account that is being satisfied by revenues raised by the discretionary millage.¹⁷⁰ Of the total calculated amount based on a district's discretionary millage and the total number of students in district charter schools, the school district must distribute 40 percent in 2024-2025, and 60 percent in 2025-2026.¹⁷¹

By October 1 of each year, each school district must certify to the DOE the amount of debt service and participation requirement that can be reduced from the total discretionary millage revenue. The Auditor General must verify compliance with these requirements during scheduled operational audits of school districts.¹⁷²

For all school districts with charter schools in that district, the total 2025-2026 estimated local funds that must be shared with charter schools is \$214,219,713. Of the 29 fiscally constrained counties¹⁷³ that may be eligible for funds under the Special Facilities Construction Account, the 2025-2026 estimated local funds that must be shared with charter schools is \$1,292,083.¹⁷⁴

Effect of Proposed Changes:

Sections 39 amends s. 1013.62, F.S., to specify the revenue to be deducted from the capital funds a district participating under the Special Facility Construction Account (SFCA) program must distribute to each eligible charter school.

The bill maintains the requirement that the total discretionary millage revenue that a school district must distribute to each eligible charter school must be reduced by the school district's annual debt service obligation incurred as of March 1, 2017, which has not been subsequently retired.

However, the bill modifies the additional amount of revenue that must be deducted from the total discretionary millage revenue related to the SFCA:

- For currently funded projects under the SFCA, the bill maintains the requirement that deducts any amount of participation requirement under the SFCA that is being satisfied by revenues raised by the discretionary millage.
- For construction projects for which SFCA funding is sought beginning in the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the additional deducted amount will be the value of 1 mill from the revenue generated under the district's 1.5 mill discretionary ad valorem levy or revenue from the school capital outlay surtax. This amount must be certified to the DOE.

Sections 57-87 make conforming and non-substantive changes throughout Florida Statutes as necessary to implement the bill.

¹⁷⁰ Section 1013.62(3), F.S.

¹⁷¹ Section 1013.62(3)(d), F.S.

¹⁷² Section 1013.62(3), F.S. Flush-left provision.

¹⁷³ Each county that is entirely within a rural area of opportunity as designated by the Governor pursuant to s. 288.0656 or each county for which the value of a mill will raise no more than \$5 million in revenue, based on the taxable value certified pursuant to s. 1011.62(4)(a)1.a., from the previous July 1, is considered a fiscally constrained county. Section 218.67(1), F.S. See also Florida Department of Revenue, *Fiscally Constrained Counties*, available at https://www.floridarevenue.com/property/Documents/fcc_map.pdf (last visited Feb. 26, 2025).

¹⁷⁴ The amount is derived from 60 percent of the calculation of each district's ad valorem taxes, after specified deductions, and eligible charter school full-time equivalent students. See 1013.62(3), F.S.

Section 88 provides that the bill takes effect on July 1, 2025.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

The bill changes a distribution to fiscally constrained counties from the tax collected on direct-to-home satellite service to sales tax. The bill redirects the portion of the direct-to-home satellite service tax to the General Revenue Fund. The bill provides for at least 50 million annually to be distributed to fiscally constrained counties from sales tax based on a new formula that takes into account sales tax collections, per capita personal income, and population. At this time the Revenue Estimating Conference consensus estimates for these bill provisions is not available.

The bill redirects revenues from documentary stamp taxes and title fees to the Department of Transportation for the new FARM program and the SCRAP. At this time the Revenue Estimating Conference consensus estimates for these bill provisions is not available. Staff informally estimates that the changes in the bill will result in an additional:

- \$30 million to the FARM program, in addition to \$20 million currently allocated for rural arterial roads, for a total of \$50 million for this program.
- Over \$30 million for the SCRAP program, in addition to the \$25 million currently allocated to the program, for a total of at least \$55 million for this program.

The impact of the changes to the bill related to school special facility construction funding has not been considered by the Revenue Estimating Conference at this time, but is expected to be negative, indeterminate.

The Department of Transportation must submit budget amendments to the Legislature, with a plan for use of the funds for the SCRAP and the FARM programs, for budget authority for the new funding in the bill redirected to these programs.

Fiscally constrained counties will see an increase in state tax revenues shared with these counties. The bill requires these funds to be used as follows: 50 percent for public safety, 30 percent for infrastructure, and 20 percent for any public purpose.

B. Private Sector Impact:

The bill creates a number of new grant programs and increases funding for existing programs which are designed to fund, either directly or indirectly, private sector activity, primarily in the transportation, education, and healthcare fields. Citizens in rural communities will benefit indirectly from programs designed to increase community investment as guided by local governments.

C. Government Sector Impact:

Local governments in rural areas of the state will benefit from participating in the grant programs created specifically for them in the bill and the associated funding for the newly created and already existing programs.

The bill makes the following appropriations to the Department Commerce:

- \$1,827,591 in recurring funds and \$652,327 in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund for the staffing and operation of the Office of Rural Prosperity, which includes funding for 17 full-time equivalent positions for the office.
- \$8 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund for the Office of Rural Prosperity for block grants to certain low-population rural counties under the Renaissance Grant Program.
- \$500,000 in recurring funds from the Grants and Donations Trust Fund within the Department of Commerce for the Public Infrastructure Smart Technology Grant Program as created by the bill.
- \$40 million in nonrecurring funds and \$5 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund for the Rural Infrastructure Fund. This appropriation is in addition to the base appropriation of \$5 million, bringing the total recurring funds for the program to \$10 million.
- \$4 million in nonrecurring funds and \$1 million in recurring funds from General Revenue for Rural Community Development Revolving Loan Fund. This appropriation is in addition to the base appropriation of \$420,000, bringing the total recurring funds for the program to \$1.42 million.
- \$250,000 in recurring funds from the Grants and Donations Trust Fund within the Department of Commerce is appropriated for the Rural Economic Development Strategy Grant program created by the bill.

- \$1 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund for the SBDC to implement the requirements of the rural-focused Florida SBDC Network activity.

The bill does not change the appropriation for the Regional Rural Development Grants Program in the Department of Commerce, which remains at \$750,000 annually.

The bill increases the base amount for the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) from \$350,000 to \$1 million. Funding for this program is provided annually in the General Appropriations Act and is based on a distribution formula. In general, local governments that typically receive the base amount will see an increase in grant funds received.

The bill appropriates \$30 million in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund to the Florida Housing Finance Corporation to be used to issue loans to preserve affordable multifamily rental housing funded through USDA loans. The bill also authorizes local SHIP administrators to use up to 25 percent of their allocated SHIP funds to preserve such housing.

The amendments made in the bill to the Rural Economic Development Initiative to modernize and revitalize the organization and functions may result in increased use of state programs by rural communities, leading to a financial benefit in these areas.

The bill makes the following appropriations to the Department of Education:

- \$25 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund for grant funding to the three regional consortium service organizations.
- \$3.6 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund for the increase in grant funds to regional consortiums, from \$50,000 to \$150,000 annually. With a base appropriation of \$1.75 million, this would bring the total recurring funds for the program to \$5.35 million annually.
- \$7 million in recurring funds from General Revenue to implement the Rural Incentive for Professional Educators (RIPE) Program.

The bill makes the following appropriations to the Department of Health:

- \$5 million in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund for the purpose of implementing the Stroke, Cardiac, and Obstetric Response and Education (SCORE) Grant Program.
- \$25 million in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund to implement the Rural Access to Primary and Preventative Care (RAPP-C) Grant Program.
- \$25 million in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund implement the Rural Hospital Capital Improvement (RHCI) Grant Program.

The bill appropriates \$1,499,261 in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund and \$1,933,112 in recurring funds from the Medical Care Trust Fund to the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) to establish a Diagnosis-Related Grouping (DRG) reimbursement methodology for critical access hospitals, as defined in s. 408.07, F.S., for the purpose of providing inpatient reimbursement to such a hospital in amounts

comparable to the reimbursement the hospital would receive for inpatient services from the federal Medicare program.

The bill appropriates \$4,840,182 in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund and \$6,240,820 in recurring funds from the Medical Care Trust Fund to the AHCA to establish an Enhanced Ambulatory Patient Grouping (EAPG) reimbursement methodology for critical access hospitals, as defined in s. 408.07, F.S., for the purpose of providing outpatient reimbursement to such a hospital in amounts comparable to the reimbursement the hospital would receive for outpatient services from the federal Medicare program.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 20.60, 163.3168, 201.15, 202.18, 212.20, 215.971, 218.67, 288.0001, 288.001, 288.007, 288.018, 288.019, 288.021, 288.065, 288.0655, 288.0656, 288.0657, 288.9961, 290.06561, 319.32, 334.044, 339.0801, 339.2816, 339.2818, 339.68, 395.6061, 420.9073, 420.9075, 1001.451, 1013.62, 1013.64, 163.3187, 212.205, 257.191, 257.193, 265.283, 288.11621, 288.11631, 443.191, 571.26, 571.265, 288.9935, 125.0104, 193.624, 196.182, 218.12, 218.125, 218.135, 218.136, 252.35, 288.102, 403.064, 589.08, 1011.62, 403.0741, 163.3177, 288.9962, 215.211, 339.66, 420.9072, 420.9076, and 420.9079.

This bill creates the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 288.013, 288.014, 288.0175, 381.403, 381.9856, 1001.4511, and 1009.635.

This bill repeals the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 288.06561 and 290.06561.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.

By Senator Simon

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to rural communities; amending s.
3 20.60, F.S.; revising the list of divisions and
4 offices within the Department of Commerce to conform
5 to changes made by the act; revising the annual
6 program reports that must be included in the annual
7 report of the Department of Commerce; amending s.
8 163.3168, F.S.; requiring the state land planning
9 agency to give preference for technical assistance
10 funding to local governments located in a rural area
11 of opportunity; requiring the agency to consult with
12 the Office of Rural Prosperity when awarding certain
13 funding; amending s. 201.15, F.S.; requiring that a
14 certain sum be paid to the credit of the State
15 Transportation Trust Fund for the exclusive use of the
16 Florida Arterial Road Modernization Program; amending
17 s. 202.18, F.S.; redirecting the transfer of certain
18 communication services tax revenue; amending s.
19 212.20, F.S.; revising the distribution of sales and
20 use tax revenue to include a transfer to fiscally
21 constrained counties; amending s. 215.971, F.S.;
22 providing construction regarding agreements funded
23 with federal or state assistance; requiring each state
24 agency to report to the Office of Rural Prosperity by
25 a certain date with a summary of certain information;
26 requiring the office to summarize the information it
27 receives for its annual report; amending s. 218.67,
28 F.S.; revising the conditions required for a county to
29 be considered a fiscally constrained county;

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30 authorizing eligible counties to receive a
31 distribution of sales and use tax revenue; revising
32 the sources that the Department of Revenue must use to
33 determine the amount distributed to fiscally
34 constrained counties; revising the factors for
35 allocation of the distribution of revenue to fiscally
36 constrained counties; requiring that the computation
37 and amount distributed be calculated based on a
38 specified rounding algorithm; authorizing specified
39 uses for the revenue; conforming a cross-reference;
40 amending s. 288.0001, F.S.; requiring the Office of
41 Economic and Demographic Research and the Office of
42 Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability
43 (OPPAGA) to prepare a report for a specified purpose;
44 specifying requirements for the report; providing that
45 the Office of Economic and Demographic Research and
46 OPPAGA must be provided with all data necessary to
47 complete the rural communities or areas report upon
48 request; authorizing the Office of Economic and
49 Demographic Research and OPPAGA to collaborate on all
50 data collection and analysis; requiring the Office of
51 Economic and Demographic Research and OPPAGA to submit
52 the report to the Legislature by a specified date;
53 providing additional requirements for the report;
54 providing for expiration; amending s. 288.001, F.S.;
55 requiring the Florida Small Business Development
56 Center Network to use certain funds appropriated for a
57 specified purpose; authorizing the network to dedicate
58 funds to facilitate certain events; amending s.

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59 288.007, F.S.; revising which local governments and
60 economic development organizations seeking to recruit
61 businesses are required to submit a specified report;
62 creating s. 288.013, F.S.; providing legislative
63 findings; creating the Office of Rural Prosperity
64 within the Department of Commerce; requiring the
65 Governor to appoint a director, subject to
66 confirmation by the Senate; providing that the
67 director reports to and serves at the pleasure of the
68 secretary of the department; providing the duties of
69 the office; requiring the office to establish by a
70 specified date a certain number of regional rural
71 community liaison centers across this state for a
72 specified purpose; providing the powers, duties, and
73 functions of the liaison centers; requiring the
74 liaison centers, to the extent possible, to coordinate
75 with certain entities; requiring the liaison centers
76 to engage with the Rural Economic Development
77 Initiative (REDI); requiring at least one staff member
78 of a liaison center to attend the monthly meetings in
79 person or by means of electronic communication;
80 requiring the director of the office to submit an
81 annual report to the Administration Commission in the
82 Executive Office of the Governor; specifying
83 requirements for the annual report; requiring that the
84 annual report also be submitted to the Legislature by
85 a specified date and published on the office's
86 website; requiring the director of the office to
87 attend the next Administration Commission meeting to

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88 present detailed information from the annual report;
89 requiring OPPAGA to review the effectiveness of the
90 office by a certain date annually until a specified
91 date; requiring OPPAGA to review the office at
92 specified intervals; requiring such reviews to include
93 certain information to be considered by the
94 Legislature; requiring that such reports be submitted
95 to the Legislature; requiring OPPAGA to review certain
96 strategies from other states; requiring OPPAGA to
97 submit to the Legislature its findings at certain
98 intervals; creating s. 288.014, F.S.; providing
99 legislative findings; requiring the Office of Rural
100 Prosperity to administer the Renaissance Grants
101 Program to provide block grants to eligible
102 communities; requiring the Office of Economic and
103 Demographic Research to certify to the Office of Rural
104 Prosperity certain information by a specified date;
105 defining the term "growth-impeded"; requiring the
106 Office of Economic and Demographic Research to certify
107 annually that a county remains growth-impeded until
108 such county has positive population growth for a
109 specified amount of time; providing that such county,
110 after 3 consecutive years of population growth, is
111 eligible to participate in the program for 1
112 additional year; requiring a county eligible for the
113 program to enter into an agreement with the Office of
114 Rural Prosperity in order to receive the block grant;
115 giving such counties broad authority to design their
116 specific plans; prohibiting the Office of Rural

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117 Prosperity from determining how such counties
118 implement the block grant; requiring regional rural
119 community liaison center staff to provide assistance,
120 upon request; requiring participating counties to
121 report annually to the Office of Rural Prosperity with
122 certain information; providing that a participating
123 county receives a specified amount from funds
124 appropriated to the program; requiring participating
125 counties to make all attempts to limit the amount
126 spent on administrative costs; authorizing
127 participating counties to contribute other funds for
128 block grant purposes; requiring participating counties
129 to hire a renaissance coordinator; providing that
130 funds from the block grant may be used to hire the
131 renaissance coordinator; providing the
132 responsibilities of the renaissance coordinator;
133 requiring the regional rural community liaison center
134 staff to provide assistance and training to the
135 renaissance coordinator, upon request; requiring
136 participating counties to design a plan to make
137 targeted investments to achieve population growth and
138 increase economic vitality; providing requirements for
139 such plans; requiring participating counties to
140 develop intergovernmental agreements with certain
141 entities in order to implement the plan; requiring the
142 Auditor General to conduct an operational audit every
143 2 years for a specified purpose; requiring the Office
144 of Economic and Demographic Research to provide an
145 annual report on a specified date of renaissance block

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146 grant recipients by county; providing requirements for
147 the annual report; requiring that the report be
148 submitted to the Governor and the Legislature;
149 prohibiting funds appropriated for the program from
150 being subject to reversion; providing for an
151 expiration of the section; creating s. 288.0175, F.S.;
152 creating the Public Infrastructure Smart Technology
153 Grant Program within the Office of Rural Prosperity;
154 defining terms; requiring the office to contract with
155 one or more smart technology lead organizations to
156 administer a grant program for a specified purpose;
157 providing the criteria for such contracts; requiring
158 that projects funded by the grant program be included
159 in the office's annual report; amending s. 288.018,
160 F.S.; requiring the office, rather than the Department
161 of Commerce, to establish a grant program to provide
162 funding for regional economic development
163 organizations; revising who may apply for such grants;
164 providing that a grant award may not exceed a certain
165 amount in a year; providing exceptions to a provision
166 that the department may expend a certain amount for a
167 certain purpose; amending s. 288.019, F.S.; revising
168 the program criteria and procedures that agencies and
169 organizations of REDI are required to review; revising
170 the list of impacts each REDI agency and organization
171 must consider in its review; requiring REDI agencies
172 and organizations to develop a proposal for
173 modifications which minimizes the financial and
174 resource impacts to a rural community; requiring that

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175 ranking of evaluation criteria and scoring procedures
176 be used only when ranking is a component of the
177 program; requiring that match requirements be waived
178 or reduced for rural communities; providing that
179 donations of land may be treated as in-kind matches;
180 requiring each agency and organization that applies
181 for or receives federal funding to request federal
182 approval to waive or reduce the financial match
183 requirements, if any, for projects in rural
184 communities; requiring that proposals be submitted to
185 the office, rather than the department; requiring each
186 REDI agency and organization to modify rules or
187 policies as necessary to reflect the finalized
188 proposal; requiring that information about authorized
189 waivers be included on the office's online rural
190 resource directory; conforming a cross-reference;
191 amending s. 288.021, F.S.; requiring, when
192 practicable, the economic development liaison to serve
193 as the agency representative for REDI; amending s.
194 288.065, F.S.; defining the term "unit of local
195 government"; requiring the office to include in its
196 annual report certain information about the Rural
197 Community Development Revolving Loan Fund; conforming
198 provisions to changes made by the act; amending s.
199 288.0655, F.S.; revising the list of grants that may
200 be awarded by the office; deleting the authorization
201 for local match requirements to be waived for a
202 catalyst site; revising the list of departments the
203 office must consult with to certify applicants;

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204 requiring the office to include certain information
205 about the Rural Infrastructure Trust Fund in its
206 annual report; conforming provisions to changes made
207 by the act; amending s. 288.0656, F.S.; providing
208 legislative findings; providing that REDI is created
209 within the Office of Rural Prosperity, rather than the
210 department; deleting the definitions of the terms
211 "catalyst project" and "catalyst site"; requiring that
212 an alternate for each designated deputy secretary be a
213 deputy secretary or higher-level staff person;
214 requiring that the names of such alternates be
215 reported to the director of the office; requiring at
216 least one rural liaison to participate in REDI
217 meetings; requiring REDI to meet at least each month;
218 deleting a provision that a rural area of opportunity
219 may designate catalyst projects; requiring REDI to
220 submit a certain report to the office, rather than to
221 the department; specifying requirements for such
222 report; conforming provisions to changes made by the
223 act; repealing s. 288.06561, F.S., relating to
224 reduction or waiver of financial match requirements;
225 amending s. 288.0657, F.S.; requiring the office,
226 rather than the department, to provide grants to
227 assist rural communities; providing that such grants
228 may be used for specified purposes; requiring the
229 rural liaison to assist those applying for such
230 grants; providing that marketing grants may include
231 certain funding; amending s. 288.9961, F.S.; revising
232 the definition of the term "underserved"; requiring

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233 the office to consult with regional rural community
234 liaison centers on development of a certain strategic
235 plan; requiring rural liaisons to assist rural
236 communities with providing feedback in applying for
237 federal grants for broadband Internet services;
238 requiring the office to submit reports with specified
239 information to the Governor and the Legislature within
240 certain timeframes; repealing s. 290.06561, F.S.,
241 relating to designation of rural enterprise zones as
242 catalyst sites; amending s. 319.32, F.S.; revising the
243 disposition of fees collected for certain title
244 certificates; amending s. 334.044, F.S.; revising the
245 powers and duties of the Department of Transportation;
246 amending s. 339.0801, F.S.; revising the allocation of
247 funds received in the State Transportation Trust Fund;
248 amending s. 339.2816, F.S.; requiring, rather than
249 authorizing, that certain funds received from the
250 State Transportation Trust Fund be used for the Small
251 County Road Assistance Program; requiring the
252 department to use other additional revenues for the
253 Small County Road Assistance Program; providing an
254 exception from the prohibition against funding
255 capacity improvements on county roads; amending s.
256 339.2818, F.S.; deleting a provision that the funds
257 allocated under the Small County Outreach Program are
258 in addition to the Small County Road Assistance
259 Program; deleting a provision that a local government
260 within the Everglades Agricultural Area, the Peace
261 River Basin, or the Suwannee River Basin may compete

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262 for additional funding; conforming provisions to
263 changes made by the act; making a technical change;
264 amending s. 339.68, F.S.; providing legislative
265 findings; creating the Florida Arterial Road
266 Modernization Program within the Department of
267 Commerce; defining the term "rural community";
268 requiring the department to allocate from the State
269 Transportation Trust Fund a minimum sum in each fiscal
270 year to fund the program; providing that such funding
271 is in addition to any other funding provided to the
272 program; providing criteria the department must use to
273 prioritize projects for funding under the program;
274 requiring the department to submit a report to the
275 Governor and the Legislature by a specified date;
276 requiring that such report be submitted every 2 years
277 thereafter; providing the criteria for such report;
278 requiring the Department of Transportation to allocate
279 additional funds to implement the Small County Road
280 Assistance Program and amend the tentative work
281 program for a specified number of fiscal years;
282 requiring the department to submit a budget amendment
283 before the adoption of the work program; requiring the
284 department to allocate sufficient funds to implement
285 the Florida Arterial Road Modernization Program;
286 requiring the department to amend the current
287 tentative work program for a specified number of
288 fiscal years to include the program's projects;
289 requiring the department to submit a budget amendment
290 before the implementation of the program; requiring

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291 that the revenue increases in the State Transportation
292 Trust Fund which are derived from the act be used to
293 fund the work program; creating s. 381.403, F.S.;
294 providing legislative findings; creating the Rural
295 Access to Primary and Preventive Care Grant Program
296 within the Department of Health for a specified
297 purpose; defining terms; requiring the department to
298 award grants under the program to physicians and
299 autonomous advanced practice registered nurses
300 intending to open new practices or practice locations
301 in qualifying rural areas; specifying eligibility
302 criteria for the grants; requiring the department, by
303 a specified date, to create an application process for
304 applying for grants under the program; specifying
305 requirements for the application and application
306 process; authorizing the department, subject to
307 specific appropriation, to award grants under the
308 program; specifying limitations on the awarding of
309 grants; specifying expenses for which grant funds are
310 authorized and prohibited; requiring the department to
311 enter into a contract with each grant recipient;
312 specifying requirements for the contracts; authorizing
313 the department to adopt rules; requiring the
314 department, beginning on a specified date and annually
315 thereafter, to provide a report containing specified
316 information to the Governor and the Legislature;
317 providing for future legislative review and repeal of
318 the program; creating s. 381.9856, F.S.; creating the
319 Stroke, Cardiac, and Obstetric Response and Education

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320 Grant Program within the Department of Health;
321 specifying the purpose of the program; defining terms;
322 requiring the department to award grants under the
323 program to certain entities meeting specified
324 criteria; requiring the department to give priority to
325 certain applicants; limiting individual grants to a
326 specified amount per year; requiring grant recipients
327 to submit quarterly reports to the department;
328 requiring the department to monitor program
329 implementation and outcomes; requiring the department
330 to submit an annual report to the Governor and the
331 Legislature by a specified date; authorizing the
332 department to adopt rules; providing construction;
333 providing for future legislative review and repeal of
334 the program; amending s. 395.6061, F.S.; providing
335 that rural hospital capital grant improvement program
336 funding may be awarded to rural hospitals to establish
337 mobile care units and telehealth kiosks for specified
338 purposes; defining terms; amending s. 420.9073, F.S.;
339 revising the calculation of guaranteed amounts
340 distributed from the Local Government Housing Trust
341 Fund; reenacting and amending s. 420.9075, F.S.;
342 authorizing a certain percentage of the funds made
343 available in each county and eligible municipality
344 from the local housing distribution to be used to
345 preserve multifamily affordable rental housing;
346 specifying what such funds may be used for; providing
347 an expiration; amending s. 1001.451, F.S.; revising
348 the services required to be provided by regional

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349 consortium service organizations when such services
350 are found to be necessary and appropriate by such
351 organizations' boards of directors; revising the
352 allocation that certain regional consortium service
353 organizations are eligible to receive from the General
354 Appropriations Act; requiring each regional consortium
355 service organization to submit an annual report to the
356 Department of Education; requiring that unexpended
357 amounts in certain funds be carried forward; requiring
358 each regional consortium service organization to
359 provide quarterly financial reports to member
360 districts; requiring member districts to designate a
361 district to serve as a fiscal agent for certain
362 purposes; providing for compensation of the fiscal
363 agent district; requiring regional consortium service
364 organizations to retain all funds received from grants
365 or contracted services to cover indirect or
366 administrative costs associated with the provision of
367 such services; requiring the regional consortium
368 service organization board of directors to determine
369 products and services provided by the organization;
370 requiring a regional consortium service organization
371 board of directors to recommend the establishment of
372 positions and appointments to a fiscal agent district;
373 requiring that personnel be employed under specified
374 personnel policies; authorizing the regional
375 consortium service organization board of directors to
376 recommend a salary schedule for personnel; authorizing
377 regional consortium service organizations to purchase

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378 or lease property and facilities essential to their
379 operations; providing for the distribution of revenue
380 if a regional consortium service organization is
381 dissolved; deleting a provision requiring applications
382 for incentive grants; authorizing regional consortium
383 service organization boards of directors to contract
384 to provide services to nonmember districts; requiring
385 that a fund balance be established for specified
386 purposes; deleting a requirement for the use of
387 certain funds; authorizing a regional consortium
388 service organization to administer a specified
389 program; creating s. 1001.4511, F.S.; creating the
390 Regional Consortia Service Organization Supplemental
391 Services Program; providing the purpose of the
392 program; authorizing funds to be used for specified
393 purposes; requiring each regional consortium service
394 organization to report the distribution of funds
395 annually to the Legislature; providing for the
396 carryforward of funds; providing appropriations;
397 creating s. 1009.635, F.S.; establishing the Rural
398 Incentive for Professional Educators Program within
399 the Department of Education; requiring the program to
400 provide financial assistance for the repayment of
401 student loans to eligible participants who establish
402 permanent residency and employment in rural
403 communities; providing that eligible participants may
404 receive up to a certain amount in total student loan
405 repayment assistance over a certain timeframe;
406 requiring the department to verify certain information

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407 of participants in the program before it disburses
408 awards; providing that the program is administered
409 through the Office of Student Financial Assistance
410 within the department; requiring the department to
411 develop procedures and monitor compliance; requiring
412 the State Board of Education to adopt rules by a
413 certain date; amending s. 1013.62, F.S.; revising the
414 calculation methodology to determine the amount of
415 revenue that a school district must distribute to each
416 eligible charter school; amending s. 1013.64, F.S.;
417 revising conditions under which a school district may
418 receive funding on an approved construction project;
419 providing appropriations for specified purposes;
420 amending ss. 163.3187, 212.205, 257.191, 257.193,
421 265.283, 288.11621, 288.11631, 443.191, 571.26, and
422 571.265, F.S.; conforming cross-references and
423 provisions to changes made by the act; reenacting s.
424 288.9935(8), F.S., relating to the Microfinance
425 Guarantee Program, to incorporate the amendment made
426 to s. 20.60, F.S., in a reference thereto; reenacting
427 ss. 125.0104(5)(c), 193.624(3), 196.182(2), 218.12(1),
428 218.125(1), 218.135(1), 218.136(1), 252.35(2)(cc),
429 288.102(4), 403.064(16)(g), 589.08(2) and (3), and
430 1011.62(1)(f), F.S., relating to authorized uses of
431 tourist development tax; applicability of assessments
432 of renewable energy source devices; application of
433 exemptions of renewable energy source devices;
434 appropriations to offset reductions in ad valorem tax
435 revenue in fiscally constrained counties; offset for

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436 tax loss associated with certain constitutional
437 amendments affecting fiscally constrained counties;
438 offset for tax loss associated with reductions in
439 value of certain citrus fruit packing and processing
440 equipment; offset for ad valorem revenue loss
441 affecting fiscally constrained counties; Division of
442 Emergency Management powers; one-to-one match
443 requirement under the Supply Chain Innovation Grant
444 Program; applicability of provisions related to reuse
445 of reclaimed water; land acquisition restrictions; and
446 funds for operation of schools, respectively, to
447 incorporate the amendment made to s. 218.67, F.S., in
448 references thereto; reenacting s. 403.0741(6)(c),
449 F.S., relating to grease waste removal and disposal,
450 to incorporate the amendments made to ss. 218.67 and
451 339.2818, F.S., in references thereto; reenacting s.
452 163.3177(7)(e), F.S., relating to required and
453 optional elements of comprehensive plans and studies
454 and surveys, to incorporate the amendment made to s.
455 288.0656, F.S., in a reference thereto; reenacting s.
456 288.9962(7)(a), F.S., relating to the Broadband
457 Opportunity Program, to incorporate the amendment made
458 to s. 288.9961, F.S., in a reference thereto;
459 reenacting s. 215.211(1), F.S., relating to service
460 charges and elimination or reduction for specified
461 proceeds, to incorporate the amendment made to s.
462 319.32, F.S., in a reference thereto; reenacting s.
463 339.66(5) and (6), F.S., relating to upgrades of
464 arterial highways with controlled access facilities,

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465 to incorporate the amendment made to s. 339.68, F.S.,
466 in references thereto; reenacting ss. 420.9072(4) and
467 (6), 420.9076(7)(b), and 420.9079(2), F.S., relating
468 to the State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program,
469 adoption of affordable housing incentive strategies
470 and committees, and the Local Government Housing Trust
471 Fund, respectively, to incorporate the amendment made
472 to s. 420.9073, F.S., in references thereto; providing
473 an effective date.

474

475 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

476

477 Section 1. Paragraph (a) of subsection (3) and paragraph
478 (c) of subsection (10) of section 20.60, Florida Statutes, are
479 amended to read:

480 20.60 Department of Commerce; creation; powers and duties.—

481 (3) (a) The following divisions and offices of the

482 Department of Commerce are established:

483 1. The Division of Economic Development.

484 2. The Division of Community Development.

485 3. The Division of Workforce Services.

486 4. The Division of Finance and Administration.

487 5. The Division of Information Technology.

488 6. The Office of the Secretary.

489 7. The Office of Rural Prosperity.

490 8.7- The Office of Economic Accountability and

491 Transparency, which shall:

492 a. Oversee the department's critical objectives as

493 determined by the secretary and make sure that the department's

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494 key objectives are clearly communicated to the public.

495 b. Organize department resources, expertise, data, and
496 research to focus on and solve the complex economic challenges
497 facing the state.

498 c. Provide leadership for the department's priority issues
499 that require integration of policy, management, and critical
500 objectives from multiple programs and organizations internal and
501 external to the department; and organize and manage external
502 communication on such priority issues.

503 d. Promote and facilitate key department initiatives to
504 address priority economic issues and explore data and identify
505 opportunities for innovative approaches to address such economic
506 issues.

507 e. Promote strategic planning for the department.

508 (10) The department shall, by November 1 of each year,
509 submit an annual report to the Governor, the President of the
510 Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives on the
511 condition of the business climate and economic development in
512 the state.

513 (c) The report must incorporate annual reports of other
514 programs, including:

515 1. A detailed report of the performance of the Black
516 Business Loan Program and a cumulative summary of quarterly
517 report data required under s. 288.714.

518 2. ~~The Rural Economic Development Initiative established~~
519 ~~under s. 288.0656.~~

520 ~~3.~~ A detailed report of the performance of the Florida
521 Development Finance Corporation and a summary of the
522 corporation's report required under s. 288.9610.

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523 ~~3.4~~ Information provided by Space Florida under s.
524 331.3051 and an analysis of the activities and accomplishments
525 of Space Florida.

526 Section 2. Subsection (5) is added to section 163.3168,
527 Florida Statutes, to read:

528 163.3168 Planning innovations and technical assistance.—

529 (5) When selecting applications for funding for technical
530 assistance, the state land planning agency shall give preference
531 to local governments located in a rural area of opportunity as
532 defined in s. 288.0656. The state land planning agency shall
533 consult with the Office of Rural Prosperity when awarding
534 funding pursuant to this section.

535 Section 3. Paragraph (i) is added to subsection (4) of
536 section 201.15, Florida Statutes, to read:

537 201.15 Distribution of taxes collected.—All taxes collected
538 under this chapter are hereby pledged and shall be first made
539 available to make payments when due on bonds issued pursuant to
540 s. 215.618 or s. 215.619, or any other bonds authorized to be
541 issued on a parity basis with such bonds. Such pledge and
542 availability for the payment of these bonds shall have priority
543 over any requirement for the costs of collection and enforcement
544 under this section. Before distribution pursuant to this
545 section, the Department of Revenue shall deduct amounts
546 necessary to pay the costs of the collection and enforcement of
547 the tax levied by this chapter. The costs may not be levied
548 against any portion of taxes pledged to debt service on bonds to
549 the extent that the costs are required to pay any amounts
550 relating to the bonds. All of the costs of the collection and
551 enforcement of the tax levied by this chapter shall be available

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552 and transferred to the extent necessary to pay debt service and
553 any other amounts payable with respect to bonds authorized
554 before January 1, 2017, secured by revenues distributed pursuant
555 to this section. All taxes remaining after deduction of costs
556 shall be distributed as follows:

557 (4) After the required distributions to the Land
558 Acquisition Trust Fund pursuant to subsections (1) and (2), the
559 lesser of 8 percent of the remainder or \$150 million in each
560 fiscal year shall be paid into the State Treasury to the credit
561 of the State Housing Trust Fund and shall be expended pursuant
562 to s. 420.50871. If 8 percent of the remainder is greater than
563 \$150 million in any fiscal year, the difference between 8
564 percent of the remainder and \$150 million shall be paid into the
565 State Treasury to the credit of the General Revenue Fund. The
566 remainder shall be distributed as follows:

567 (i) A total of \$30 million shall be paid to the credit of
568 the State Transportation Trust Fund, which funds are exclusively
569 for the use of the Florida Arterial Road Modernization Program
570 as provided in s. 339.68.

571 Section 4. Paragraph (c) of subsection (2) of section
572 202.18, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

573 202.18 Allocation and disposition of tax proceeds.—The
574 proceeds of the communications services taxes remitted under
575 this chapter shall be treated as follows:

576 (2) The proceeds of the taxes remitted under s.
577 202.12(1)(b) shall be allocated as follows:

578 (c)1. After the distribution required under paragraph (b),
579 70 percent of the remainder ~~During each calendar year, the~~
580 ~~remaining portion of the proceeds~~ shall be transferred to the

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581 Local Government Half-cent Sales Tax Clearing Trust Fund.
582 ~~Seventy percent of such proceeds shall be~~ and allocated in the
583 same proportion as the allocation of total receipts of the half-
584 cent sales tax under s. 218.61 and the emergency distribution
585 under s. 218.65 in the prior state fiscal year. Thirty percent
586 of the remainder ~~of such proceeds~~ shall be transferred to the
587 General Revenue Fund ~~distributed pursuant to s. 218.67.~~

588 2. The proportion of the proceeds allocated based on the
589 emergency distribution under s. 218.65 shall be distributed
590 pursuant to s. 218.65.

591 3. In each calendar year, the proportion of the proceeds
592 allocated based on the half-cent sales tax under s. 218.61 shall
593 be allocated to each county in the same proportion as the
594 county's percentage of total sales tax allocation for the prior
595 state fiscal year and distributed pursuant to s. 218.62.

596 4. The department shall distribute the appropriate amount
597 to each municipality and county each month at the same time that
598 local communications services taxes are distributed pursuant to
599 subsection (3).

600 Section 5. Paragraph (d) of subsection (6) of section
601 212.20, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

602 212.20 Funds collected, disposition; additional powers of
603 department; operational expense; refund of taxes adjudicated
604 unconstitutionally collected.—

605 (6) Distribution of all proceeds under this chapter and ss.
606 202.18(1)(b) and (2)(b) and 203.01(1)(a)3. is as follows:

607 (d) The proceeds of all other taxes and fees imposed
608 pursuant to this chapter or remitted pursuant to s. 202.18(1)(b)
609 and (2)(b) shall be distributed as follows:

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610 1. In any fiscal year, the greater of \$500 million, minus
611 an amount equal to 4.6 percent of the proceeds of the taxes
612 collected pursuant to chapter 201, or 5.2 percent of all other
613 taxes and fees imposed pursuant to this chapter or remitted
614 pursuant to s. 202.18(1)(b) and (2)(b) shall be deposited in
615 monthly installments into the General Revenue Fund.

616 2. After the distribution under subparagraph 1., 8.9744
617 percent of the amount remitted by a sales tax dealer located
618 within a participating county pursuant to s. 218.61 shall be
619 transferred into the Local Government Half-cent Sales Tax
620 Clearing Trust Fund. Beginning July 1, 2003, the amount to be
621 transferred shall be reduced by 0.1 percent, and the department
622 shall distribute this amount to the Public Employees Relations
623 Commission Trust Fund less \$5,000 each month, which shall be
624 added to the amount calculated in subparagraph 3. and
625 distributed accordingly.

626 3. After the distribution under subparagraphs 1. and 2.,
627 0.0966 percent shall be transferred to the Local Government
628 Half-cent Sales Tax Clearing Trust Fund and distributed pursuant
629 to s. 218.65.

630 4. After the distributions under subparagraphs 1., 2., and
631 3., 2.0810 percent of the available proceeds shall be
632 transferred monthly to the Revenue Sharing Trust Fund for
633 Counties pursuant to s. 218.215.

634 5. After the distributions under subparagraphs 1., 2., and
635 3., 1.3653 percent of the available proceeds shall be
636 transferred monthly to the Revenue Sharing Trust Fund for
637 Municipalities pursuant to s. 218.215. If the total revenue to
638 be distributed pursuant to this subparagraph is at least as

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639 great as the amount due from the Revenue Sharing Trust Fund for
640 Municipalities and the former Municipal Financial Assistance
641 Trust Fund in state fiscal year 1999-2000, no municipality shall
642 receive less than the amount due from the Revenue Sharing Trust
643 Fund for Municipalities and the former Municipal Financial
644 Assistance Trust Fund in state fiscal year 1999-2000. If the
645 total proceeds to be distributed are less than the amount
646 received in combination from the Revenue Sharing Trust Fund for
647 Municipalities and the former Municipal Financial Assistance
648 Trust Fund in state fiscal year 1999-2000, each municipality
649 shall receive an amount proportionate to the amount it was due
650 in state fiscal year 1999-2000.

651 6. After the distributions required under subparagraphs 1.-
652 5., the greater of \$50 million or 0.1438 percent of the
653 available proceeds shall be transferred to fiscally constrained
654 counties pursuant to s. 218.67.

655 7. Of the remaining proceeds:

656 a. In each fiscal year, the sum of \$29,915,500 shall be
657 divided into as many equal parts as there are counties in the
658 state, and one part shall be distributed to each county. The
659 distribution among the several counties must begin each fiscal
660 year on or before January 5th and continue monthly for a total
661 of 4 months. If a local or special law required that any moneys
662 accruing to a county in fiscal year 1999-2000 under the then-
663 existing provisions of s. 550.135 be paid directly to the
664 district school board, special district, or a municipal
665 government, such payment must continue until the local or
666 special law is amended or repealed. The state covenants with
667 holders of bonds or other instruments of indebtedness issued by

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668 local governments, special districts, or district school boards
669 before July 1, 2000, that it is not the intent of this
670 subparagraph to adversely affect the rights of those holders or
671 relieve local governments, special districts, or district school
672 boards of the duty to meet their obligations as a result of
673 previous pledges or assignments or trusts entered into which
674 obligated funds received from the distribution to county
675 governments under then-existing s. 550.135. This distribution
676 specifically is in lieu of funds distributed under s. 550.135
677 before July 1, 2000.

678 b. The department shall distribute \$166,667 monthly to each
679 applicant certified as a facility for a new or retained
680 professional sports franchise pursuant to s. 288.1162. Up to
681 \$41,667 shall be distributed monthly by the department to each
682 certified applicant as defined in s. 288.11621 for a facility
683 for a spring training franchise. However, not more than \$416,670
684 may be distributed monthly in the aggregate to all certified
685 applicants for facilities for spring training franchises.
686 Distributions begin 60 days after such certification and
687 continue for not more than 30 years, except as otherwise
688 provided in s. 288.11621. A certified applicant identified in
689 this sub-subparagraph may not receive more in distributions than
690 expended by the applicant for the public purposes provided in s.
691 288.1162(5) or s. 288.11621(3).

692 c. The department shall distribute up to \$83,333 monthly to
693 each certified applicant as defined in s. 288.11631 for a
694 facility used by a single spring training franchise, or up to
695 \$166,667 monthly to each certified applicant as defined in s.
696 288.11631 for a facility used by more than one spring training

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697 franchise. Monthly distributions begin 60 days after such
698 certification or July 1, 2016, whichever is later, and continue
699 for not more than 20 years to each certified applicant as
700 defined in s. 288.11631 for a facility used by a single spring
701 training franchise or not more than 25 years to each certified
702 applicant as defined in s. 288.11631 for a facility used by more
703 than one spring training franchise. A certified applicant
704 identified in this sub-subparagraph may not receive more in
705 distributions than expended by the applicant for the public
706 purposes provided in s. 288.11631(3).

707 d. The department shall distribute \$15,333 monthly to the
708 State Transportation Trust Fund.

709 e.(I) On or before July 25, 2021, August 25, 2021, and
710 September 25, 2021, the department shall distribute \$324,533,334
711 in each of those months to the Unemployment Compensation Trust
712 Fund, less an adjustment for refunds issued from the General
713 Revenue Fund pursuant to s. 443.131(3)(e)3. before making the
714 distribution. The adjustments made by the department to the
715 total distributions shall be equal to the total refunds made
716 pursuant to s. 443.131(3)(e)3. If the amount of refunds to be
717 subtracted from any single distribution exceeds the
718 distribution, the department may not make that distribution and
719 must subtract the remaining balance from the next distribution.

720 (II) Beginning July 2022, and on or before the 25th day of
721 each month, the department shall distribute \$90 million monthly
722 to the Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund.

723 (III) If the ending balance of the Unemployment
724 Compensation Trust Fund exceeds \$4,071,519,600 on the last day
725 of any month, as determined from United States Department of the

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726 Treasury data, the Office of Economic and Demographic Research
727 shall certify to the department that the ending balance of the
728 trust fund exceeds such amount.

729 (IV) This sub-subparagraph is repealed, and the department
730 shall end monthly distributions under sub-sub-subparagraph (II),
731 on the date the department receives certification under sub-sub-
732 subparagraph (III).

733 f. Beginning July 1, 2023, in each fiscal year, the
734 department shall distribute \$27.5 million to the Florida
735 Agricultural Promotional Campaign Trust Fund under s. 571.26,
736 for further distribution in accordance with s. 571.265.

737 ~~8.7.~~ All other proceeds must remain in the General Revenue
738 Fund.

739 Section 6. Paragraph (h) of subsection (1) of section
740 215.971, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

741 215.971 Agreements funded with federal or state
742 assistance.—

743 (1) An agency agreement that provides state financial
744 assistance to a recipient or subrecipient, as those terms are
745 defined in s. 215.97, or that provides federal financial
746 assistance to a subrecipient, as defined by applicable United
747 States Office of Management and Budget circulars, must include
748 all of the following:

749 (h)1. If the agency agreement provides federal or state
750 financial assistance to a county or municipality that is a rural
751 community or rural area of opportunity as those terms are
752 defined in s. 288.0656(2), a provision allowing the agency to
753 provide for the payment of invoices to the county, municipality,
754 or rural area of opportunity as that term is defined in s.

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755 288.0656(2), for verified and eligible performance that has been
756 completed in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth
757 in the agreement. This provision is not intended to require
758 reimbursement to the county, municipality, or rural area of
759 opportunity for invoices paid, but to allow the agency to
760 provide for the payment of invoices due. The agency shall
761 expedite such payment requests in order to facilitate the timely
762 payment of invoices received by the county, municipality, or
763 rural area of opportunity. This provision is included to
764 alleviate the financial hardships that certain rural counties
765 and municipalities encounter when administering agreements, and
766 must be exercised by the agency when a county or municipality
767 demonstrates financial hardship, to the extent that federal or
768 state law, rule, or other regulation allows such payments. This
769 paragraph may not be construed to alter or limit any other
770 provisions of federal or state law, rule, or other regulation.

771 2. By August 1, 2026, and each year thereafter, each state
772 agency shall report to the Office of Rural Prosperity
773 summarizing the implementation of this paragraph for the
774 preceding fiscal year. The Office of Rural Prosperity shall
775 summarize the information received pursuant to this paragraph in
776 its annual report as required in s. 288.013.

777 Section 7. Section 218.67, Florida Statutes, is amended to
778 read:

779 218.67 Distribution for fiscally constrained counties.—

780 (1) Each county ~~that is entirely within a rural area of~~
781 ~~opportunity as designated by the Governor pursuant to s.~~
782 ~~288.0656 or each county~~ for which the value of a mill will raise
783 no more than \$10 ~~\$5~~ million in revenue, based on the taxable

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784 value certified pursuant to s. 1011.62(4)(a)1.a., from the
785 previous July 1, shall be considered a fiscally constrained
786 county.

787 (2) Each fiscally constrained county government that
788 participates in the local government half-cent sales tax shall
789 be eligible to receive an additional distribution ~~from the Local~~
790 ~~Government Half-cent Sales Tax Clearing Trust Fund~~, as provided
791 in s. 212.20(6)(d)6. ~~s. 202.18(2)(e)1.~~, in addition to its
792 regular monthly distribution provided under this part and any
793 emergency or supplemental distribution under s. 218.65.

794 (3) The amount to be distributed to each fiscally
795 constrained county shall be determined by the Department of
796 Revenue at the beginning of the fiscal year, using the prior
797 fiscal year's sales and use tax collections ~~July 1 taxable value~~
798 ~~certified pursuant to s. 1011.62(4)(a)1.a.~~, tax data, population
799 as defined in s. 218.21, and the most current calendar year per
800 capita personal income published by the Bureau of Economic
801 Analysis of the United States Department of Commerce ~~millage~~
802 ~~rate levied for the prior fiscal year.~~ The amount distributed
803 shall be allocated based upon the following factors:

804 (a) The contribution-to-revenue ~~relative revenue-raising~~
805 ~~capacity~~ factor for each participating county shall equal 100
806 multiplied by a quotient, the numerator of which is the county's
807 population and the denominator of which is the state sales and
808 use tax collections attributable to the county ~~be the ability of~~
809 ~~the eligible county to generate ad valorem revenues from 1 mill~~
810 ~~of taxation on a per capita basis. A county that raises no more~~
811 ~~than \$25 per capita from 1 mill shall be assigned a value of 1;~~
812 ~~a county that raises more than \$25 but no more than \$30 per~~

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813 ~~capita from 1 mill shall be assigned a value of 0.75; and a~~
814 ~~county that raises more than \$30 but no more than \$50 per capita~~
815 ~~from 1 mill shall be assigned a value of 0.5. No value shall be~~
816 ~~assigned to counties that raise more than \$50 per capita from 1~~
817 ~~mill of ad valorem taxation.~~

818 (b) The personal-income local effort factor shall equal a
819 quotient, the numerator of which is the median per capita
820 personal income of participating counties and the denominator of
821 which is the county's per capita personal income ~~be a measure of~~
822 ~~the relative level of local effort of the eligible county as~~
823 ~~indicated by the millage rate levied for the prior fiscal year.~~
824 ~~The local effort factor shall be the most recently adopted~~
825 ~~countywide operating millage rate for each eligible county~~
826 ~~multiplied by 0.1.~~

827 (c) Each eligible county's proportional allocation of the
828 total amount available to be distributed to all of the eligible
829 counties shall be in the same proportion as the sum of the
830 county's two factors is to the sum of the two factors for all
831 eligible counties. The proportional rate computation must be
832 carried to the fifth decimal place, and the amount to distribute
833 to each county must be rounded to the next whole dollar amount.
834 The counties that are eligible to receive an allocation under
835 this subsection and the amount available to be distributed to
836 such counties do ~~shall~~ not include counties participating in the
837 phaseout period under subsection (4) or the amounts they remain
838 eligible to receive during the phaseout.

839 (4) For those counties that no longer qualify under the
840 requirements of subsection (1) after the effective date of this
841 act, there shall be a 2-year phaseout period. Beginning on July

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842 1 of the year following the year in which the value of a mill
843 for that county exceeds \$10 ~~\$5~~ million in revenue, the county
844 shall receive two-thirds of the amount received in the prior
845 year, and beginning on July 1 of the second year following the
846 year in which the value of a mill for that county exceeds \$10 ~~\$5~~
847 million in revenue, the county shall receive one-third of the
848 amount received in the last year that the county qualified as a
849 fiscally constrained county. Following the 2-year phaseout
850 period, the county is ~~shall~~ no longer ~~be~~ eligible to receive any
851 distributions under this section unless the county can be
852 considered a fiscally constrained county as provided in
853 subsection (1).

854 (5) (a) The revenues received under this section must be
855 allocated ~~may be used~~ by a county to be used for the following
856 purposes:

857 1. Fifty percent may be used for public safety, including
858 salary expenditures for law enforcement officers or correctional
859 officers, as those terms are defined in s. 943.10(1) and (2),
860 respectively, firefighters as defined in s. 633.102, or
861 emergency medical technicians or paramedics as those terms are
862 defined in s. 401.23.

863 2. Thirty percent may be used for infrastructure needs.

864 3. Twenty percent may be expended for any public purpose.

865 (b) The revenues received under this section ~~any public~~
866 ~~purpose, except that such revenues may not be used to pay debt~~
867 ~~service on bonds, notes, certificates of participation, or any~~
868 ~~other forms of indebtedness.~~

869 Section 8. Subsection (6) is added to section 288.0001,
870 Florida Statutes, to read:

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871 288.0001 Economic Development Programs Evaluation.—The
872 Office of Economic and Demographic Research and the Office of
873 Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA)
874 shall develop and present to the Governor, the President of the
875 Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the
876 chairs of the legislative appropriations committees the Economic
877 Development Programs Evaluation.

878 (6) (a) The Office of Economic and Demographic Research and
879 OPPAGA shall prepare a report on the impact of the Florida
880 Statutes on rural communities. Specifically, the report must
881 include the following:

882 1. A review of definitions in the Florida Statutes of terms
883 such as "rural community," "rural area of opportunity," and
884 other similar terms used to define rural areas of this state,
885 including population-based references, to assess the adequacy of
886 the current statutory framework in defining these areas. The
887 analysis must include, but need not be limited to:

888 a. Evaluation of whether current provisions properly
889 distinguish these communities or areas from more urban and
890 suburban parts of this state;

891 b. Consideration of updates to the definitions and
892 references to classify additional rural areas, such as growing
893 communities, unincorporated areas, or rural communities by
894 design; and

895 c. Study of appropriate metrics to be used to describe
896 rural communities or areas, such as population, geographic,
897 demographic, or other metrics, or combinations thereof.

898 2. A survey of local governments meeting the statutory
899 definition of "rural community" or "rural area of opportunity"

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900 to assess the benefits to the local government of being
901 identified as such and any perceived unmet needs in the
902 implementation of current statutory provisions designed to
903 support rural communities or areas.

904 3. An analysis of state grant programs and recurring
905 appropriations that explicitly benefit rural communities or
906 areas, including, but not limited to, program purpose, funding
907 amounts, participation rates, and consistency with peer-reviewed
908 studies on effective economic programs for these areas.

909 (b) Upon request, the Office of Economic and Demographic
910 Research and OPPAGA must be provided with all data necessary to
911 complete the report, including any confidential data, by any
912 entity with information related to this review. The offices may
913 collaborate on all data collection and analysis.

914 (c) The Office of Economic and Demographic Research and
915 OPPAGA shall submit a report to the President of the Senate and
916 the Speaker of the House of Representatives by December 31,
917 2025. The report must provide recommendations to address any
918 findings, including any changes in statutory definitions or
919 references to rural communities or areas, opportunities to
920 enhance state support to rural communities or areas, outcome
921 measures or other criteria that may be used to examine the
922 effectiveness of state grant programs for rural communities or
923 areas, and adjustments to program design, including changes to
924 increase participation in state grant programs for rural
925 communities or areas.

926 (d) This subsection expires July 1, 2026.

927 Section 9. Present paragraphs (d) and (e) of subsection (7)
928 of section 288.001, Florida Statutes, are redesignated as

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929 paragraphs (e) and (f), respectively, and a new paragraph (d) is
930 added to that subsection, to read:

931 288.001 The Florida Small Business Development Center
932 Network.—

933 (7) ADDITIONAL STATE FUNDS; USES; PAY-PER-PERFORMANCE
934 INCENTIVES; STATEWIDE SERVICE; SERVICE ENHANCEMENTS; BEST
935 PRACTICES; ELIGIBILITY.—

936 (d) Notwithstanding paragraphs (a), (b), and (c), the
937 network shall use funds directly appropriated for the specific
938 purpose of expanding service in rural communities, as defined in
939 s. 288.0656, in addition to any funds allocated by the network
940 from other sources. The network shall use the funds to develop
941 an activity plan focused on network consultants and resources in
942 rural communities. In collaboration with regional economic
943 development organizations as defined in s. 288.018, the plan
944 must provide for either full- or part-time consultants to be
945 available for at least 20 hours per week in rural areas or be
946 permanently stationed in rural areas. This may include
947 establishing a circuit in specific rural locations to ensure the
948 consultants' availability on a regular basis. By using the funds
949 to create a regular presence in rural areas, the network can
950 strengthen community collaboration, raise awareness of available
951 resources to provide opportunities for new business development
952 or existing business growth, and make professional experience,
953 education, and business information available in these essential
954 communities. The network may dedicate funds to facilitate local
955 or regional events that focus on small business topics, provide
956 consulting services, and leverage partner organizations, such as
957 the regional economic development organizations, local workforce

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958 development boards as described in s. 445.07, and Florida
959 College System institutions.

960 Section 10. Section 288.007, Florida Statutes, is amended
961 to read:

962 288.007 Inventory of communities seeking to recruit
963 businesses.—By September 30 of each year, a county or
964 municipality that has a population of at least 25,000 or its
965 local economic development organization, and each local
966 government within a rural area of opportunity as defined in s.
967 288.0656 or its local economic development organization, shall
968 ~~must~~ submit to the department a brief overview of the strengths,
969 services, and economic development incentives that its community
970 offers. The local government or its local economic development
971 organization also shall ~~must~~ identify any industries that it is
972 encouraging to locate or relocate to its area. Unless otherwise
973 required pursuant to this section, a county or municipality
974 having a population of 25,000 or less ~~fewer~~ or its local
975 economic development organization seeking to recruit businesses
976 may submit information as required in this section and may
977 participate in any activity or initiative resulting from the
978 collection, analysis, and reporting of the information to the
979 department pursuant to this section.

980 Section 11. Section 288.013, Florida Statutes, is created
981 to read:

982 288.013 Office of Rural Prosperity.—

983 (1) The Legislature finds that the unique characteristics
984 and nature of the rural communities in this state are integral
985 to making this state an attractive place to visit, work, and
986 live. Further, the Legislature finds that building a prosperous

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987 rural economy and vibrant rural communities is in the best
988 interest of this state. Rural prosperity is integral to
989 supporting this state's infrastructure, housing, and
990 agricultural and food-processing needs, as well as promoting the
991 health and advancement of the overall economy of this state. It
992 is of importance to the state that its rural areas are able to
993 grow, whether locally or in regional partnerships. To better
994 serve rural communities, and in recognition of rural Florida's
995 unique challenges and opportunities, the Office of Rural
996 Prosperity is established to ensure these efforts are
997 coordinated, focused, and effective.

998 (2) The Office of Rural Prosperity is created within the
999 Department of Commerce for the purpose of supporting rural
1000 communities by helping rural stakeholders navigate available
1001 programs and resources and representing rural interests across
1002 state government.

1003 (3) The Governor shall appoint a director to lead the
1004 office, subject to confirmation by the Senate. The director
1005 shall report to the secretary of the department and shall serve
1006 at the pleasure of the secretary.

1007 (4) The office shall do all of the following:

1008 (a) Serve as the state's point of contact for rural local
1009 governments.

1010 (b) Administer the Rural Economic Development Initiative
1011 ("REDI") pursuant to s. 288.0656.

1012 (c) Provide training and technical assistance to rural
1013 local governments on a broad range of community and economic
1014 development activities. The training and technical assistance
1015 may be offered using communications technology or in person and

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1016 must be recorded and posted to the office's website. The
1017 training and technical assistance must include, at a minimum,
1018 the following topics:

1019 1. How to access state and federal resources, including
1020 training on the online rural resource directory required under
1021 paragraph (d).

1022 2. Best practices relating to comprehensive planning,
1023 economic development, and land development in rural communities.

1024 3. Strategies to address management and administrative
1025 capacity challenges unique to rural local governments.

1026 4. Requirements of, and updates on recent changes to, the
1027 Community Planning Act under s. 163.3161.

1028 5. Updates on other recent state and federal laws affecting
1029 rural local governments.

1030 (d) Create and maintain an online rural resource directory
1031 to serve as an interactive tool to navigate the various state
1032 and federal resources, tools, and services available to rural
1033 local governments. The office shall regularly maintain the
1034 resource directory and, to the greatest extent possible, include
1035 up-to-date information on state and federal programs, resources,
1036 tools, and services that address the needs of rural communities
1037 in all areas of governance. Each state agency shall routinely
1038 provide information and updates to the office for maintenance of
1039 the resource directory. The resource directory must allow users
1040 to search by indicators, such as agency name, resource type, or
1041 topic, and include a notification function to allow users to
1042 receive alerts when new or modified resources are available. To
1043 the greatest extent possible, the resource directory must
1044 include information on financial match requirements for the

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1045 state and federal programs listed in the directory.

1046 (5) (a) By October 1, 2025, the office shall establish and
1047 staff seven regional rural community liaison centers across this
1048 state for the purpose of providing specialized in-person state
1049 support to local governments in rural areas of opportunity as
1050 defined in s. 288.0656. The department shall by rule divide this
1051 state into seven regions and assign a regional rural community
1052 liaison center to each region. Each liaison center shall support
1053 the local governments within its geographic territory and shall
1054 be staffed with at least two full-time department personnel. At
1055 a minimum, liaison centers shall have the following powers,
1056 duties, and functions:

1057 1. Work with local governments to plan and achieve goals
1058 for local or regional growth, economic development, and rural
1059 prosperity.

1060 2. Facilitate local government access to state and federal
1061 resources, such as grants, loans, and other aid or resources.

1062 3. Advise local governments on available waivers of program
1063 requirements, including financial match waivers or reductions,
1064 for projects using state or federal funds through the Rural
1065 Economic Development Initiative under s. 288.0656.

1066 4. Coordinate local government technical assistance needs
1067 with the department and other state or federal agencies.

1068 5. Promote model ordinances, policies, and strategies
1069 related to economic development.

1070 6. Assist local governments with regulatory and reporting
1071 compliance.

1072 (b) To the greatest extent possible, the regional rural
1073 community liaison centers shall coordinate with local and

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1074 regional governmental entities, regional economic development
1075 organizations as defined in s. 288.018, and other appropriate
1076 entities to establish a network to foster community-driven
1077 solutions that promote viable and sustainable rural communities.

1078 (c) The regional rural community liaison centers shall
1079 regularly engage with the Rural Economic Development Initiative
1080 established in s. 288.0656, and at least one staff member from
1081 each liaison center shall attend, either in person or by means
1082 of electronic communication, the monthly meetings required by s.
1083 288.0656(6)(c).

1084 (6) By December 1, 2025, and each year thereafter, the
1085 director of the office shall submit to the Administration
1086 Commission in the Executive Office of the Governor a written
1087 report describing the office's operations and accomplishments
1088 for the preceding year, inclusive of the Rural Economic
1089 Development Initiative report required by s. 288.0656(8). In
1090 consultation with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer
1091 Services, the office shall also include in the annual report
1092 recommendations for policies, programs, and funding to further
1093 support the needs of rural communities in this state. The office
1094 shall submit the annual report to the President of the Senate
1095 and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by December 1 of
1096 each year and publish the annual report on the office's website.
1097 The director shall present, in person at the next scheduled
1098 Administration Commission meeting, detailed information from the
1099 annual report required by this subsection.

1100 (7)(a) The Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government
1101 Accountability (OPPAGA) shall review the effectiveness of the
1102 office by December 15, 2026, and each year thereafter until

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1103 2028. Beginning in 2029, OPPAGA shall review and evaluate the
1104 office every 3 years and shall submit a report based on its
1105 findings. Each report must recommend policy and statutory
1106 modifications for consideration by the Legislature. OPPAGA shall
1107 submit each report to the President of the Senate and the
1108 Speaker of the House of Representatives pursuant to the
1109 schedule.

1110 (b) OPPAGA shall review strategies implemented by other
1111 states on rural community preservation, enhancement, and
1112 revitalization and report on their effectiveness and potential
1113 for implementation in this state. OPPAGA shall include its
1114 findings in its report to the President of the Senate and the
1115 Speaker of the House of Representatives by December 15, 2027,
1116 and every 3 years thereafter.

1117 (c)1. OPPAGA shall review each state-funded or state-
1118 administered grant and loan program available to local
1119 governments to:

1120 a. Identify any specified local government financial match
1121 requirements and whether any portion of a match may be waived or
1122 is required to be waived, pursuant to law, and programs where a
1123 financial match waiver may be appropriate for rural local
1124 government applicants, if not contemplated by law.

1125 b. Identify grant and loan application evaluation criteria,
1126 including scoring procedures, for programs that may be perceived
1127 to be overly burdensome for rural local government applicants,
1128 and whether special accommodations or preferences for rural
1129 local governments may be appropriate.

1130 2. OPPAGA shall produce a report based on its review and
1131 submit the report to the President of the Senate and the Speaker

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1132 of the House of Representatives by December 15, 2026. This
1133 paragraph expires June 30, 2027.

1134 Section 12. Section 288.014, Florida Statutes, is created
1135 to read:

1136 288.014 Renaissance Grants Program.—

1137 (1) The Legislature finds that it has traditionally
1138 provided programs to assist rural communities with economic
1139 development and enhance their ability to attract businesses and
1140 that, by providing that extra component of economic viability,
1141 rural communities are able to attract new businesses and grow
1142 existing ones. However, the Legislature finds that a subset of
1143 rural communities has decreased in population over the past
1144 decade, contributing to a decline in local business activity and
1145 economic development. The Legislature further finds that the
1146 state must transform its assistance to these specific rural
1147 communities to help them achieve a necessary precursor of
1148 economic viability. The Legislature further finds that the
1149 approach intended by the creation of renaissance grants is to
1150 focus on reversing the economic deterioration in rural
1151 communities by retaining and attracting residents by giving them
1152 a reason to stay, which is the impetus of natural economic
1153 growth, business opportunities, and increased quality of life.

1154 (2) The Office of Rural Prosperity within the department
1155 shall administer the Renaissance Grants Program to provide block
1156 grants to eligible counties. By October 1, 2025, the Office of
1157 Economic and Demographic Research shall certify to the Office of
1158 Rural Prosperity which counties are growth-impeded. For the
1159 purposes of this section, "growth-impeded" means a county that,
1160 as of the most recent population estimate, has had a declining

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1161 population over the last 10 years. After an initial
1162 certification, the Office of Economic and Demographic Research
1163 shall annually certify whether the county remains growth-
1164 impeded, until the county has 3 consecutive years of population
1165 growth. Upon such certification of population growth, the county
1166 is eligible to participate in the program for 1 additional year
1167 in order for the county to prepare for the end of block grant
1168 funding.

1169 (3) (a) Each participating county shall enter into an
1170 agreement with the Office of Rural Prosperity to receive the
1171 block grant. Each county has broad authority to design its
1172 specific plan to achieve population growth within the broad
1173 parameters identified in this section. The Office of Rural
1174 Prosperity may not determine the manner in which the county
1175 implements the block grant. However, regional rural community
1176 liaison center staff shall provide assistance in developing the
1177 county's plan, upon request.

1178 (b) Each participating county shall report annually to the
1179 Office of Rural Prosperity on activities undertaken,
1180 intergovernmental agreements entered into, and other information
1181 as required by the office.

1182 (c) Each participating county shall receive \$1 million from
1183 the funds appropriated to the program. Counties participating in
1184 the program shall make all attempts to limit expenses for
1185 administrative costs, consistent with the need for prudent
1186 management and accountability in the use of public funds. Each
1187 county may contribute other funds for block grant purposes,
1188 including local, state, or federal grant funds, or seek out in-
1189 kind or financial contributions from private or public sources

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1190 to assist in fulfilling the activities undertaken.

1191 (4) (a) A participating county shall hire and retain a
1192 renaissance coordinator and may use block grant funds for this
1193 purpose. The renaissance coordinator is responsible for:

1194 1. Ensuring that block grant funds are used as provided in
1195 this section;

1196 2. Coordinating with other local governments, school
1197 boards, Florida College System institutions, or other entities;
1198 and

1199 3. Reporting as necessary to the state, including
1200 information necessary pursuant to subsection (7).

1201 (b) The Office of Rural Prosperity regional rural community
1202 liaison center staff shall provide assistance, upon request, and
1203 training to the renaissance coordinator to ensure successful
1204 implementation of the block grant.

1205 (5) A participating county shall design a plan to make
1206 targeted investments in the community to achieve population
1207 growth and increase the economic vitality of the community. The
1208 plan must include the following key features for use of the
1209 state support:

1210 (a) Technology centers with extended hours located within
1211 schools or on school premises, administered by the local school
1212 board, for such schools which provide extended hours and support
1213 for access by students.

1214 (b) Facilities that colocate adult day care with child care
1215 facilities. The site-sharing facilities must be managed to also
1216 provide opportunities for direct interaction between generations
1217 and increase the health and well-being of both younger and older
1218 participants, reduce social isolation, and create cost and time

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1219 efficiencies for working family members. The regional rural
1220 community liaison center staff of the Office of Rural Prosperity
1221 shall assist the county, upon request, with bringing to the
1222 Rural Economic Development Initiative or directly to the
1223 appropriate state agency recommendations necessary to streamline
1224 any required state permits, licenses, regulations, or other
1225 requirements.

1226 (c) Technology labs managed in agreement with the nearest
1227 Florida College System institution or a career center as
1228 established under s. 1001.44. Repurposing vacant industrial
1229 sites or existing office space must be given priority in the
1230 selection of lab locations. Each local technology lab must be
1231 staffed and open for extended hours with the capacity to
1232 provide:

1233 1. Access to trainers and equipment necessary for users to
1234 earn various certificates or online degrees in technology;

1235 2. Hands-on assistance with applying for appropriate remote
1236 work opportunities; and

1237 3. Studio space with equipment for graduates and other
1238 qualifying residents to perform remote work that is based on the
1239 use of technology. Collaboration with community partners,
1240 including the local workforce development board as described in
1241 s. 445.007, to provide training opportunities, in-kind support
1242 such as transportation to and from the lab, financing of
1243 equipment for in-home use, or basic maintenance of such
1244 equipment is required.

1245 (6) In addition to the hiring of a renaissance coordinator,
1246 a participating county shall develop intergovernmental
1247 agreements for shared responsibilities with its municipalities,

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1248 school board, and Florida College System institution or career
1249 center and enter into necessary contracts with providers and
1250 community partners in order to implement the plan.

1251 (7) (a) Every 2 years, the Auditor General shall conduct an
1252 operational audit as defined in s. 11.45 of each county's grant
1253 activities, beginning in 2026.

1254 (b) On December 31, 2026, and every year thereafter, the
1255 Office of Economic and Demographic Research shall submit an
1256 annual report of renaissance block grant recipients by county to
1257 the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of
1258 Representatives. The report must provide key economic indicators
1259 that measure progress in altering longer-term trends in the
1260 county. The Office of Rural Prosperity shall provide the Office
1261 of Economic and Demographic Research with information as
1262 requested to complete the report.

1263 (8) Notwithstanding s. 216.301, funds appropriated for the
1264 purposes of this section are not subject to reversion.

1265 (9) This section expires June 30, 2040.

1266 Section 13. Section 288.0175, Florida Statutes, is created
1267 to read:

1268 288.0175 Public Infrastructure Smart Technology Grant
1269 Program.—

1270 (1) The Public Infrastructure Smart Technology Grant
1271 Program is established within the Office of Rural Prosperity
1272 within the department to fund and support the development of
1273 public infrastructure smart technology projects in communities
1274 located in rural areas of opportunity, subject to legislative
1275 appropriation.

1276 (2) As used in this section, the term:

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1277 (a) "Public infrastructure smart technology" means systems
1278 and applications that use connectivity, data analytics, and
1279 automation to improve public infrastructure by increasing
1280 efficiency, enhancing public services, and promoting sustainable
1281 development.

1282 (b) "Rural area of opportunity" has the same meaning as in
1283 s. 288.0656.

1284 (c) "Smart technology lead organization" means a not-for-
1285 profit corporation organized under s. 501(c)(3) of the Internal
1286 Revenue Code which has been in existence for at least 3 years
1287 and specializes in smart region planning.

1288 (3)(a) The Office of Rural Prosperity shall contract with
1289 one or more smart technology lead organizations to administer
1290 the grant program for the purpose of deploying public
1291 infrastructure smart technology in rural communities. In
1292 accordance with the terms required by the office, the smart
1293 technology lead organization shall provide grants to counties
1294 and municipalities located within a rural area of opportunity
1295 for public infrastructure smart technology projects.

1296 (b) The office's contract with a smart technology lead
1297 organization must specify the contract deliverables, including
1298 financial reports and other reports due the office, timeframes
1299 for achieving contractual obligations, and any other
1300 requirements the office determines are necessary. The contract
1301 must require the smart technology lead organization to do the
1302 following:

1303 1. Collaborate with counties and municipalities located in
1304 rural areas of opportunity to identify opportunities for local
1305 governments to institute cost-effective smart technology

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1306 solutions for improving public services and infrastructure.

1307 2. Provide technical assistance to counties and
 1308 municipalities located in rural areas of opportunity in
 1309 developing plans for public infrastructure smart technology
 1310 projects.

1311 3. Assist counties and municipalities located in rural
 1312 areas of opportunity in connecting with other communities,
 1313 companies, and other entities to leverage the impact of each
 1314 public infrastructure smart technology project.

1315 (4) The office shall include in its annual report required
 1316 by s. 288.013(6) a description of the projects funded under this
 1317 section.

1318 Section 14. Subsections (1), (2), and (4) of section
 1319 288.018, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

1320 288.018 Regional Rural Development Grants Program.—

1321 (1)(a) For the purposes of this section, the term “regional
 1322 economic development organization” means an economic development
 1323 organization located in or contracted to serve a rural area of
 1324 opportunity, as defined in s. 288.0656 ~~s. 288.0656(2)(d)~~.

1325 (b) Subject to appropriation, the Office of Rural
 1326 Prosperity ~~department~~ shall establish a grant program to provide
 1327 funding to regional economic development organizations for the
 1328 purpose of building the professional capacity of those
 1329 organizations. Building the professional capacity of a regional
 1330 economic development organization includes hiring professional
 1331 staff to develop, deliver, and provide needed economic
 1332 development professional services, including technical
 1333 assistance, education and leadership development, marketing, and
 1334 project recruitment. Grants may also be used by a regional

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1335 economic development organization to provide technical
1336 assistance to local governments, local economic development
1337 organizations, and existing and prospective businesses.

1338 (c) A regional economic development organization may apply
1339 annually to the office ~~department~~ for a grant. The office
1340 ~~department~~ is authorized to approve, on an annual basis, grants
1341 to such regional economic development organizations. The office
1342 may award a maximum amount of \$50,000 in a year to maximum
1343 ~~amount an organization may receive in any year will be \$50,000,~~
1344 or \$250,000 each to for any three regional economic development
1345 organizations that serve an entire region of a rural area of
1346 opportunity designated pursuant to s. 288.0656(7) if they are
1347 recognized by the office ~~department~~ as serving such a region.

1348 (2) In approving the participants, the office ~~department~~
1349 shall require the following:

1350 (a) Documentation of official commitments of support from
1351 each of the units of local government represented by the
1352 regional organization.

1353 (b) Demonstration that the organization is in existence and
1354 actively involved in economic development activities serving the
1355 region.

1356 (c) Demonstration of the manner in which the organization
1357 is or will coordinate its efforts with those of other local and
1358 state organizations.

1359 (4) Except as otherwise provided in the General
1360 Appropriations Act, the department may expend up to \$750,000
1361 each fiscal year from funds appropriated ~~to the Rural Community~~
1362 ~~Development Revolving Loan Fund~~ for the purposes outlined in
1363 this section.

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1364 Section 15. Section 288.019, Florida Statutes, is amended
1365 to read:

1366 288.019 Rural considerations in grant review and evaluation
1367 processes; financial match waiver or reduction.-

1368 (1) Notwithstanding any other law, and to the fullest
1369 extent possible, each agency and organization ~~the member~~
1370 ~~agencies and organizations~~ of the Rural Economic Development
1371 Initiative (REDI) as defined in s. 288.0656 ~~s. 288.0656(6)(a)~~
1372 shall review:

1373 (a) All grant and loan application evaluation criteria and
1374 scoring procedures to ensure the fullest access for rural
1375 communities ~~counties~~ as defined in s. 288.0656 ~~s. 288.0656(2)~~ to
1376 resources available throughout the state; and

1377 (b) The financial match requirements for projects in rural
1378 communities.

1379 (2) ~~(1)~~ Each REDI agency and organization shall consider the
1380 impact on and ability of rural communities to meet and be
1381 competitive under such criteria, scoring, and requirements. Upon
1382 review, each REDI agency and organization shall ~~review all~~
1383 ~~evaluation and scoring procedures and develop~~ a proposal for
1384 modifications to those procedures which minimize the financial
1385 and resource impact to a rural community, including waiver or
1386 reduction of any required financial match requirements ~~impact of~~
1387 ~~a project within a rural area.~~

1388 (a) ~~(2)~~ Evaluation criteria and scoring procedures must
1389 provide for an appropriate ranking, when ranking is a component
1390 of the program, based on the proportionate impact that projects
1391 have on a rural area when compared with similar project impacts
1392 on an urban area. Additionally,

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1393 ~~(3)~~ evaluation criteria and scoring procedures must
1394 recognize the disparity of available fiscal resources for an
1395 equal level of financial support from an urban county or
1396 municipality and a rural county or municipality.

1397 ~~(a)~~ The evaluation criteria should weight contribution in
1398 proportion to the amount of funding available at the local
1399 level.

1400 (b) Match requirements must be waived or reduced for rural
1401 communities. When appropriate, an in-kind match must should be
1402 allowed and applied as a financial match when a rural community
1403 county is experiencing economic financial distress as defined in
1404 s. 288.0656 through elevated unemployment at a rate in excess of
1405 the state's average by 5 percentage points or because of the
1406 loss of its ad valorem base. Donations of land, though usually
1407 not recognized as an in-kind match, may be treated as such. As
1408 appropriate, each agency and organization that applies for or
1409 receives federal funding must request federal approval to waive
1410 or reduce the financial match requirements, if any, for projects
1411 in rural communities.

1412 ~~(3)(4)~~ For ~~existing programs~~, The proposal modified
1413 ~~evaluation criteria and scoring procedure~~ must be submitted
1414 ~~delivered~~ to the Office of Rural Prosperity department for
1415 distribution to the REDI agencies and organizations. The REDI
1416 agencies and organizations shall review and make comments and
1417 recommendations that. ~~Future rules, programs, evaluation~~
1418 ~~criteria, and scoring processes must be brought before a REDI~~
1419 ~~meeting for review, discussion, and recommendation to allow~~
1420 rural communities ~~counties~~ fuller access to the state's
1421 resources.

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1422 (4) Each REDI agency and organization shall ensure that
1423 related administrative rules or policies are modified, as
1424 necessary, to reflect the finalized proposal and that
1425 information about the authorized wavier or reduction is included
1426 in the online rural resource directory of the Office of Rural
1427 Prosperity required in s. 288.013(4) (d).

1428 (5) The rural liaison from the related regional district
1429 shall assist the rural community to make requests of waiver or
1430 reduction of match.

1431 Section 16. Subsection (3) is added to section 288.021,
1432 Florida Statutes, to read:

1433 288.021 Economic development liaison.—

1434 (3) When practicable, the staff member appointed as the
1435 economic development liaison shall also serve as the agency
1436 representative for the Rural Economic Development Initiative
1437 pursuant to s. 288.0656.

1438 Section 17. Section 288.065, Florida Statutes, is amended
1439 to read:

1440 288.065 Rural Community Development Revolving Loan Fund.—

1441 (1) The Rural Community Development Revolving Loan Fund
1442 Program is established within the Office of Rural Prosperity
1443 ~~department~~ to facilitate the use of existing federal, state, and
1444 local financial resources by providing local governments with
1445 financial assistance to further promote the economic viability
1446 of rural communities. These funds may be used to finance
1447 initiatives directed toward maintaining or developing the
1448 economic base of rural communities, especially initiatives
1449 addressing employment opportunities for residents of these
1450 communities.

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1451 (2) (a) The program shall provide for long-term loans, loan
 1452 guarantees, and loan loss reserves to units of local
 1453 governments, or economic development organizations substantially
 1454 underwritten by a unit of local government.7

1455 (b) For purposes of this section, the term "unit of local
 1456 government" means:

1457 1. A county ~~within counties~~ with a population ~~populations~~
 1458 of 75,000 or less. ~~fewer, or within any~~

1459 2. A county with a population of 125,000 or less ~~fewer~~
 1460 which is contiguous to a county with a population of 75,000 or
 1461 less. ~~fewer~~

1462 3. A municipality within a county described in subparagraph
 1463 1. or subparagraph 2.

1464 4. A county or municipality within a rural area of
 1465 opportunity.

1466
 1467 For purposes of this paragraph, population is determined in
 1468 accordance with the most recent official estimates pursuant to
 1469 s. 186.901 and must include those residing in incorporated and
 1470 unincorporated areas of a county, ~~based on the most recent~~
 1471 ~~official population estimate as determined under s. 186.901,~~
 1472 ~~including those residing in incorporated areas and those~~
 1473 ~~residing in unincorporated areas of the county, or to units of~~
 1474 ~~local government, or economic development organizations~~
 1475 ~~substantially underwritten by a unit of local government, within~~
 1476 ~~a rural area of opportunity.~~

1477 (c) ~~(b)~~ Requests for loans must ~~shall~~ be made by application
 1478 to the office ~~department~~. Loans must ~~shall~~ be made pursuant to
 1479 agreements specifying the terms and conditions agreed to between

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1480 the applicant and the department. The loans are ~~shall be~~ the
1481 legal obligations of the applicant.

1482 (d)~~(e)~~ All repayments of principal and interest shall be
1483 returned to the loan fund and made available for loans to other
1484 applicants. However, in a rural area of opportunity designated
1485 under s. 288.0656 ~~by the Governor~~, and upon approval by the
1486 office ~~department~~, repayments of principal and interest may be
1487 retained by the applicant if such repayments are dedicated and
1488 matched to fund regionally based economic development
1489 organizations representing the rural area of opportunity.

1490 (3) The office ~~department~~ shall manage the fund,
1491 establishing loan practices that must include, but are not
1492 limited to, procedures for establishing loan interest rates,
1493 uses of funding, application procedures, and application review
1494 procedures. The office has ~~department shall have~~ final approval
1495 authority for any loan under this section.

1496 (4) Notwithstanding ~~the provisions of~~ s. 216.301, funds
1497 appropriated for this loan fund may ~~purpose shall~~ not be subject
1498 to reversion.

1499 (5) The office shall include in its annual report required
1500 under s. 288.013 detailed information about the fund, including
1501 loans made during the previous fiscal year, loans active, loans
1502 terminated or repaid, and the amount of funds not obligated as
1503 of 14 days before the date the report is due.

1504 Section 18. Subsections (1), (2), and (3) of section
1505 288.0655, Florida Statutes, are amended, and subsection (6) is
1506 added to that section, to read:

1507 288.0655 Rural Infrastructure Fund.—

1508 (1) There is created within the Office of Rural Prosperity

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1509 ~~department~~ the Rural Infrastructure Fund to facilitate the
1510 planning, preparing, and financing of infrastructure projects in
1511 rural communities which will encourage job creation, capital
1512 investment, and the strengthening and diversification of rural
1513 economies by promoting tourism, trade, and economic development.

1514 (2) (a) Funds appropriated by the Legislature shall be
1515 distributed by the office ~~department~~ through grant programs that
1516 maximize the use of federal, local, and private resources,
1517 including, but not limited to, those available under the Small
1518 Cities Community Development Block Grant Program.

1519 (b) To facilitate access of rural communities and rural
1520 areas of opportunity as defined by the Rural Economic
1521 Development Initiative to infrastructure funding programs of the
1522 Federal Government, such as those offered by the United States
1523 Department of Agriculture and the United States Department of
1524 Commerce, and state programs, including those offered by Rural
1525 Economic Development Initiative agencies, and to facilitate
1526 local government or private infrastructure funding efforts, the
1527 office ~~department~~ may award grants for up to 75 percent of the
1528 total infrastructure project cost, or up to 100 percent of the
1529 total infrastructure project cost for a project located in a
1530 rural community as defined in s. 288.0656(2) which is also
1531 located in a fiscally constrained county as defined in s.
1532 218.67(1) or a rural area of opportunity as defined in s.
1533 288.0656(2). Eligible uses of funds may include improving any
1534 inadequate infrastructure that has resulted in regulatory action
1535 that prohibits economic or community growth and reducing the
1536 costs to community users of proposed infrastructure improvements
1537 that exceed such costs in comparable communities. Eligible uses

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1538 of funds include improvements to public infrastructure for
1539 industrial or commercial sites and upgrades to or development of
1540 public tourism infrastructure. Authorized infrastructure may
1541 include the following public or public-private partnership
1542 facilities: storm water systems; telecommunications facilities;
1543 roads or other remedies to transportation impediments; nature-
1544 based tourism facilities; or other physical requirements
1545 necessary to facilitate tourism, trade, and economic development
1546 activities in the community. Authorized infrastructure may also
1547 include publicly or privately owned self-powered nature-based
1548 tourism facilities, publicly owned telecommunications
1549 facilities, and additions to the distribution facilities of the
1550 existing natural gas utility as defined in s. 366.04(3)(c), the
1551 existing electric utility as defined in s. 366.02, or the
1552 existing water or wastewater utility as defined in s.
1553 367.021(12), or any other existing water or wastewater facility,
1554 which owns a gas or electric distribution system or a water or
1555 wastewater system in this state when:

1556 1. A contribution-in-aid of construction is required to
1557 serve public or public-private partnership facilities under the
1558 tariffs of any natural gas, electric, water, or wastewater
1559 utility as defined herein; and

1560 2. Such utilities as defined herein are willing and able to
1561 provide such service.

1562 (c) The office department may award grants of up to
1563 \$300,000 for infrastructure feasibility studies, design and
1564 engineering activities, or other infrastructure planning and
1565 preparation or site readiness activities. Site readiness
1566 expenses may include clearing title, surveys, permitting,

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1567 environmental studies, and regulatory compliance costs. Grants
1568 awarded under this paragraph may be used in conjunction with
1569 grants awarded under paragraph (b). In evaluating applications
1570 under this paragraph, the office ~~department~~ shall consider the
1571 extent to which the application seeks to minimize administrative
1572 and consultant expenses.

1573 (d) The office ~~department~~ shall participate in a memorandum
1574 of agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture
1575 under which state funds available through the Rural
1576 Infrastructure Fund may be advanced, in excess of the prescribed
1577 state share, for a project that has received from the United
1578 States Department of Agriculture a preliminary determination of
1579 eligibility for federal financial support. State funds in excess
1580 of the prescribed state share which are advanced pursuant to
1581 this paragraph and the memorandum of agreement shall be
1582 reimbursed when funds are awarded under an application for
1583 federal funding.

1584 (e) To enable local governments to access the resources
1585 available pursuant to s. 403.973(17), the office ~~department~~ may
1586 award grants for surveys, feasibility studies, and other
1587 activities related to the identification and preclearance review
1588 of land which is suitable for preclearance review. Authorized
1589 grants under this paragraph may not exceed \$75,000 each, except
1590 in the case of a project in a rural area of opportunity, in
1591 which case the grant may not exceed \$300,000. Any funds awarded
1592 under this paragraph must be matched at a level of 50 percent
1593 with local funds, except that any funds awarded for a project in
1594 a rural area of opportunity do not require a match of local
1595 funds. ~~If an application for funding is for a catalyst site, as~~

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1596 ~~defined in s. 288.0656, the requirement for local match may be~~
1597 ~~waived pursuant to the process in s. 288.06561.~~ In evaluating
1598 applications under this paragraph, the office ~~department~~ shall
1599 consider the extent to which the application seeks to minimize
1600 administrative and consultant expenses.

1601 (3) The office ~~department~~, in consultation with the
1602 Department of Transportation ~~Florida Tourism Industry Marketing~~
1603 ~~Corporation~~, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the
1604 Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, as
1605 appropriate, shall review and certify applications pursuant to
1606 s. 288.061. The review must include an evaluation of the
1607 economic benefit and long-term viability. The office has
1608 ~~department shall have~~ final approval for any grant under this
1609 section.

1610 (6) The office shall include in its annual report required
1611 under s. 288.013 detailed information about the fund, including
1612 grants made for the year, grants active, grants terminated or
1613 complete, and the amount of funds not obligated as of 14 days
1614 before the date the report is due.

1615 Section 19. Subsection (1), paragraphs (a), (b), and (e) of
1616 subsection (2), subsections (3) and (6), paragraph (c) of
1617 subsection (7), and subsection (8) of section 288.0656, Florida
1618 Statutes, are amended to read:

1619 288.0656 Rural Economic Development Initiative.—

1620 (1)(a) Recognizing that rural communities and regions
1621 continue to face extraordinary challenges in their efforts to
1622 significantly improve their economies, specifically in terms of
1623 personal income, job creation, average wages, and strong tax
1624 bases, it is the intent of the Legislature to encourage and

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1625 facilitate the location and expansion of major economic
1626 development projects of significant scale in such rural
1627 communities. The Legislature finds that rural communities are
1628 the essential conduits for the economy's distribution,
1629 manufacturing, and food supply.

1630 (b) The Rural Economic Development Initiative, known as
1631 "REDI," is created within the Office of Rural Prosperity
1632 department, and all the participation of state and regional
1633 agencies listed in paragraph (6) (a) shall participate in this
1634 initiative is authorized.

1635 (2) As used in this section, the term:

1636 ~~(a) "Catalyst project" means a business locating or~~
1637 ~~expanding in a rural area of opportunity to serve as an economic~~
1638 ~~generator of regional significance for the growth of a regional~~
1639 ~~target industry cluster. The project must provide capital~~
1640 ~~investment on a scale significant enough to affect the entire~~
1641 ~~region and result in the development of high-wage and high-skill~~
1642 ~~jobs.~~

1643 ~~(b) "Catalyst site" means a parcel or parcels of land~~
1644 ~~within a rural area of opportunity that has been prioritized as~~
1645 ~~a geographic site for economic development through partnerships~~
1646 ~~with state, regional, and local organizations. The site must be~~
1647 ~~reviewed by REDI and approved by the department for the purposes~~
1648 ~~of locating a catalyst project.~~

1649 (c)(e) "Rural community" means:

- 1650 1. A county with a population of 75,000 or less fewer.
- 1651 2. A county with a population of 125,000 or less fewer
1652 which is contiguous to a county with a population of 75,000 or
1653 less fewer.

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1654 3. A municipality within a county described in subparagraph
1655 1. or subparagraph 2.

1656 4. An unincorporated federal enterprise community or an
1657 incorporated rural city with a population of 25,000 or less
1658 ~~fewer~~ and an employment base focused on traditional agricultural
1659 or resource-based industries, located in a county not defined as
1660 rural, which has at least three or more of the economic distress
1661 factors identified in paragraph (a) ~~paragraph (e)~~ and verified
1662 by the department.

1663
1664 For purposes of this paragraph, population shall be determined
1665 in accordance with the most recent official estimate pursuant to
1666 s. 186.901.

1667 (3) REDI shall be responsible for coordinating and focusing
1668 the efforts and resources of state and regional agencies on the
1669 problems which affect the fiscal, economic, and community
1670 viability of Florida's ~~economically distressed~~ rural
1671 communities, working with local governments, community-based
1672 organizations, and private organizations that have an interest
1673 in the growth and development of these communities to find ways
1674 to balance environmental and growth management issues with local
1675 needs.

1676 (6) (a) By August 1 of each year, the head of each of the
1677 following agencies and organizations shall designate a deputy
1678 secretary or higher-level staff person from within the agency or
1679 organization to serve as the REDI representative for the agency
1680 or organization:

- 1681 1. The Department of Transportation.
- 1682 2. The Department of Environmental Protection.

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- 1683 3. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
- 1684 4. The Department of State.
- 1685 5. The Department of Health.
- 1686 6. The Department of Children and Families.
- 1687 7. The Department of Corrections.
- 1688 8. The Department of Education.
- 1689 9. The Department of Juvenile Justice.
- 1690 10. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.
- 1691 11. Each water management district.
- 1692 12. CareerSource Florida, Inc.
- 1693 13. VISIT Florida.
- 1694 14. The Florida Regional Planning Council Association.
- 1695 15. The Agency for Health Care Administration.
- 1696 16. The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS).
- 1697 (b) An alternate for each designee must ~~shall~~ also be
- 1698 chosen, who must also be a deputy secretary or higher-level
- 1699 staff person, and the names of the designees and alternates must
- 1700 ~~shall~~ be reported sent to the director of the Office of Rural
- 1701 Prosperity. At least one rural liaison from each regional rural
- 1702 community liaison center must participate in the REDI meetings
- 1703 ~~Secretary of Commerce.~~
- 1704 (c) REDI shall meet at least each month, but may meet more
- 1705 often as necessary. Each REDI representative, or his or her
- 1706 designee, shall be physically present or available by means of
- 1707 electronic communication for each meeting.
- 1708 (d) ~~(b)~~ Each REDI representative must have comprehensive
- 1709 knowledge of his or her agency's functions, both regulatory and
- 1710 service in nature, and of the state's economic goals, policies,
- 1711 and programs. This person shall be the primary point of contact

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1712 for his or her agency with REDI on issues and projects relating
1713 to ~~economically distressed~~ rural communities and with regard to
1714 expediting project review, shall ensure a prompt effective
1715 response to problems arising with regard to rural issues, and
1716 shall work closely with the other REDI representatives in the
1717 identification of opportunities for preferential awards of
1718 program funds, contractual or other agreement provisions which
1719 meet the requirements of s. 215.971, and allowances and waiver
1720 of program requirements when necessary to encourage and
1721 facilitate ~~long-term private~~ capital investment and job
1722 creation.

1723 (e) ~~(e)~~ The REDI representatives shall work with REDI in the
1724 review and evaluation of statutes and rules for adverse impact
1725 on rural communities and the development of alternative
1726 proposals to mitigate that impact.

1727 (f) ~~(d)~~ Each REDI representative shall be responsible for
1728 ensuring that each district office or facility of his or her
1729 agency is informed quarterly about the Rural Economic
1730 Development Initiative and for providing assistance throughout
1731 the agency in the implementation of REDI activities.

1732 (7)

1733 ~~(c) Each rural area of opportunity may designate catalyst~~
1734 ~~projects, provided that each catalyst project is specifically~~
1735 ~~recommended by REDI and confirmed as a catalyst project by the~~
1736 ~~department. All state agencies and departments shall use all~~
1737 ~~available tools and resources to the extent permissible by law~~
1738 ~~to promote the creation and development of each catalyst project~~
1739 ~~and the development of catalyst sites.~~

1740 (8) REDI shall submit a report to the Office of Rural

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1741 ~~Prosperity department~~ on all REDI activities for the previous
1742 fiscal year as a supplement to the office's ~~department's~~ annual
1743 report required under s. 288.013 ~~s. 20.60~~. This supplementary
1744 report must include:

1745 (a) A status report on every project ~~all projects~~ currently
1746 being coordinated through REDI, the number of preferential
1747 awards and allowances made pursuant to this section in detail by
1748 award, allowance, or match type, the dollar amount of such
1749 awards, and the names of the recipients.

1750 (b) A description of all waivers of program requirements
1751 granted, including a list by program of each waiver that was
1752 granted. If waivers were requested but were not granted, a list
1753 of ungranted waivers, including reasons why the waivers were not
1754 granted, must be included.

1755 (c) Detailed information as to the economic impact of the
1756 projects coordinated by REDI.

1757 (d) Recommendations based on the review and evaluation of
1758 statutes and rules having an adverse impact on rural communities
1759 and proposals to mitigate such adverse impacts.

1760 (e) Legislative recommendations for statutory waivers or
1761 reductions of specified economic development program
1762 requirements, including financial match waivers or reductions,
1763 for applicants within rural areas of opportunity.

1764 (f) Outcomes of proposals submitted pursuant to s. 288.019.
1765 Section 20. Section 288.06561, Florida Statutes, is
1766 repealed.

1767 Section 21. Subsections (2), (3), and (4) of section
1768 288.0657, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

1769 288.0657 Florida rural economic development strategy

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1770 grants.-

1771 (2) The Office of Rural Prosperity shall provide ~~department~~
1772 ~~may accept and administer moneys appropriated to the department~~
1773 ~~for providing~~ grants to assist rural communities to develop and
1774 implement strategic economic development plans. Grants may be
1775 provided to assist with costs associated with marketing a site
1776 to business and site selectors for an economic development
1777 project that is part of an economic development plan, either as
1778 part of funding to develop and implement a plan or related to an
1779 already adopted plan.

1780 (3) A rural community, an economic development organization
1781 in a rural area, or a regional organization representing at
1782 least one rural community or such economic development
1783 organizations may apply for such grants. The rural liaison for
1784 the rural community shall assist those applying for such grants.

1785 (4) The office ~~department~~ shall establish criteria for
1786 reviewing grant applications. These criteria must ~~shall~~ include,
1787 but are not limited to, the degree of participation and
1788 commitment by the local community and the application's
1789 consistency with local comprehensive plans or the application's
1790 proposal to ensure such consistency. Grants for marketing may
1791 include funding for advertising campaign materials and costs
1792 associated with meetings, trade missions, and professional
1793 development affiliated with site preparation and marketing. The
1794 office ~~department~~ shall review each application for a grant. ~~The~~
1795 ~~department may approve grants only to the extent that funds are~~
1796 ~~appropriated for such grants by the Legislature.~~

1797 Section 22. Paragraph (f) of subsection (2) and paragraphs
1798 (a), (b), and (c) of subsection (4) of section 288.9961, Florida

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1799 Statutes, are amended, and subsections (6) and (7) are added to
1800 that section, to read:

1801 288.9961 Promotion of broadband adoption; Florida Office of
1802 Broadband.—

1803 (2) DEFINITIONS.—As used in this section, the term:

1804 (f) “Underserved” means a geographic area of this state in
1805 which there is no provider of broadband Internet service that
1806 offers a connection to the Internet with a capacity for
1807 transmission at a consistent speed of at least 100 megabits per
1808 second downstream and at least 20 ~~10~~ megabits per second
1809 upstream.

1810 (4) FLORIDA OFFICE OF BROADBAND.—The Florida Office of
1811 Broadband is created within the Division of Community
1812 Development in the department for the purpose of developing,
1813 marketing, and promoting broadband Internet services in this
1814 state. The office, in the performance of its duties, shall do
1815 all of the following:

1816 (a) Create a strategic plan that has goals and strategies
1817 for increasing and improving the availability of, access to, and
1818 use of broadband Internet service in this state. In development
1819 of the plan, the department shall incorporate applicable federal
1820 broadband activities, including any efforts or initiatives of
1821 the Federal Communications Commission, to improve broadband
1822 Internet service in this state. The plan must identify available
1823 federal funding sources for the expansion or improvement of
1824 broadband. The strategic plan must be submitted to the Governor,
1825 the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of
1826 Representatives by June 30, 2022. The strategic plan must be
1827 updated biennially thereafter. The plan must include a process

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1828 to review and verify public input regarding transmission speeds
1829 and availability of broadband Internet service throughout this
1830 state. The office shall consult with each regional rural
1831 community liaison center within the Office of Rural Prosperity
1832 on the development and update of the plan.

1833 (b) Build and facilitate local technology planning teams or
1834 partnerships with members representing cross-sections of the
1835 community, which may include, but are not limited to,
1836 representatives from the following organizations and industries:
1837 libraries, K-12 education, colleges and universities, local
1838 health care providers, private businesses, community
1839 organizations, economic development organizations, local
1840 governments, tourism, parks and recreation, and agriculture. The
1841 local technology planning teams or partnerships shall work with
1842 rural communities to help the communities understand their
1843 current broadband availability, locate unserved and underserved
1844 businesses and residents, identify assets relevant to broadband
1845 deployment, build partnerships with broadband service providers,
1846 and identify opportunities to leverage assets and reduce
1847 barriers to the deployment of broadband Internet services in the
1848 community. The teams or partnerships must be proactive in rural
1849 communities as defined in s. 288.0656 ~~fiscally constrained~~
1850 ~~counties~~ in identifying and providing assistance, in
1851 coordination with the regional rural community liaison centers
1852 within the Office of Rural Prosperity, with applying for federal
1853 grants for broadband Internet service.

1854 (c) Provide technical and planning assistance to rural
1855 communities in coordination with the regional rural community
1856 liaison centers within the Office of Rural Prosperity.

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1857 (6) The office shall submit to the Governor, the President
1858 of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a
1859 quarterly report detailing the implementation of broadband
1860 activities in rural, unserved, and underserved communities. Such
1861 information must be listed by county and include the amount of
1862 state and federal funds allocated and expended in the county by
1863 program; the progress toward deploying broadband in the county;
1864 any technical assistance provided; the activities of the local
1865 technology planning teams and partnerships; and the fulfillment
1866 of any other duties of the office required by this part.

1867 (7) By December 31 each year, the office shall submit to
1868 the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of
1869 the House of Representatives an annual report on the office's
1870 operations and accomplishments for that calendar year and the
1871 status of broadband Internet service access and use in this
1872 state. The report must also incorporate the quarterly reports on
1873 rural, unserved, and underserved communities required by
1874 subsection (6).

1875 Section 23. Section 290.06561, Florida Statutes, is
1876 repealed.

1877 Section 24. Paragraph (a) of subsection (5) of section
1878 319.32, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1879 319.32 Fees; service charges; disposition.—

1880 (5) (a) Forty-seven dollars of each fee collected, except
1881 for fees charged on a certificate of title for a motor vehicle
1882 for hire registered under s. 320.08(6), for each applicable
1883 original certificate of title and each applicable duplicate copy
1884 of a certificate of title shall be deposited as follows: ~~into~~
1885 ~~the State Transportation Trust Fund. Deposits to the State~~

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1886 ~~Transportation Trust Fund pursuant to this paragraph may not~~
 1887 ~~exceed \$200 million in any fiscal year, and from any collections~~
 1888 ~~in excess of that amount during the fiscal year,~~

1889 1. The first \$30 million collected shall be deposited into
 1890 the Highway Safety Operating Trust Fund; ~~and~~

1891 2. Any remaining collections shall be paid into the State
 1892 Transportation Trust General Revenue Fund.

1893 Section 25. Subsection (37) is added to section 334.044,
 1894 Florida Statutes, to read:

1895 334.044 Powers and duties of the department.—The department
 1896 shall have the following general powers and duties:

1897 (37) To provide technical assistance and support from the
 1898 appropriate district of the department to counties that are not
 1899 located in a metropolitan planning organization created pursuant
 1900 to s. 339.175.

1901 Section 26. Section 339.0801, Florida Statutes, is amended
 1902 to read:

1903 339.0801 Allocation of increased revenues derived from
 1904 amendments to s. 319.32(5) (a) ~~by ch. 2012-128.~~—

1905 (1) The first \$200 million of funds that result from
 1906 increased revenues to the State Transportation Trust Fund
 1907 derived from the amendments to s. 319.32(5) (a) made by s. 11,
 1908 chapter 2012-128, Laws of Florida, this act must be used
 1909 annually, first as set forth in paragraph (a) ~~subsection (1)~~ and
 1910 then as set forth in paragraphs (b), (c), and (d) ~~subsections~~
 1911 ~~(2)–(4)~~, notwithstanding any other provision of law:

1912 (a) ~~1.(1)(a)~~ Beginning in the 2013-2014 fiscal year and
 1913 annually for 30 years thereafter, \$10 million shall be for the
 1914 purpose of funding any seaport project identified in the adopted

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1915 work program of the Department of Transportation, to be known as
1916 the Seaport Investment Program.

1917 2.~~(b)~~ The revenues may be assigned, pledged, or set aside
1918 as a trust for the payment of principal or interest on revenue
1919 bonds, or other forms of indebtedness issued by an individual
1920 port or appropriate local government having jurisdiction
1921 thereof, or collectively by interlocal agreement among any of
1922 the ports, or used to purchase credit support to permit such
1923 borrowings. Alternatively, revenue bonds shall be issued by the
1924 Division of Bond Finance at the request of the Department of
1925 Transportation under the State Bond Act and shall be secured by
1926 such revenues as are provided in this subsection.

1927 3.~~(e)~~ Revenue bonds or other indebtedness issued hereunder
1928 are not a general obligation of the state and are secured solely
1929 by a first lien on the revenues distributed under this
1930 subsection.

1931 4.~~(d)~~ The state covenants with holders of the revenue bonds
1932 or other instruments of indebtedness issued pursuant to this
1933 subsection that it will not repeal this subsection; nor take any
1934 other action, including but not limited to amending this
1935 subsection, that will materially and adversely affect the rights
1936 of such holders so long as revenue bonds or other indebtedness
1937 authorized by this subsection are outstanding.

1938 5.~~(e)~~ The proceeds of any revenue bonds or other
1939 indebtedness, after payment of costs of issuance and
1940 establishment of any required reserves, shall be invested in
1941 projects approved by the Department of Transportation and
1942 included in the department's adopted work program, by amendment
1943 if necessary. As required under s. 11(f), Art. VII of the State

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1944 Constitution, the Legislature approves projects included in the
1945 department's adopted work program, including any projects added
1946 to the work program by amendment under s. 339.135(7).

1947 6.~~(f)~~ Any revenues that are not used for the payment of
1948 bonds as authorized by this subsection may be used for purposes
1949 authorized under the Florida Seaport Transportation and Economic
1950 Development Program. This revenue source is in addition to any
1951 amounts provided for and appropriated in accordance with ss.
1952 311.07 and 320.20(3) and (4).

1953 (b)~~(2)~~ Beginning in the 2013-2014 fiscal year and annually
1954 thereafter, \$10 million shall be transferred to the
1955 Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund, to be used as specified
1956 in s. 427.0159.

1957 (c)~~(3)~~ Beginning in the 2013-2014 fiscal year and annually
1958 thereafter, \$10 million shall be allocated to the Small County
1959 Outreach Program to be used as specified in s. 339.2818. These
1960 funds are in addition to the funds provided for the program
1961 pursuant to s. 201.15(4)(a)2.

1962 (d)~~(4)~~ After the distributions required pursuant to
1963 paragraphs (a), (b), and (c) ~~subsections (1)-(3)~~, the remaining
1964 funds shall be used annually for transportation projects within
1965 this state for existing or planned strategic transportation
1966 projects which connect major markets within this state or
1967 between this state and other states, which focus on job
1968 creation, and which increase this state's viability in the
1969 national and global markets.

1970 (2) The remaining funds that result from increased revenue
1971 to the State Transportation Trust Fund derived pursuant to s.
1972 319.32(5)(a) must be used annually, notwithstanding any other

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1973 law, beginning in the 2025-2026 fiscal year and annually
 1974 thereafter, for the Small County Road Assistance Program as
 1975 prescribed in s. 339.2816.

1976 (3)(5) Pursuant to s. 339.135(7), the department shall
 1977 amend the work program to add the projects provided for in this
 1978 section.

1979 Section 27. Subsection (3) and paragraph (a) of subsection
 1980 (4) of section 339.2816, Florida Statutes, are amended, and
 1981 paragraph (c) of subsection (4) of that section is reenacted, to
 1982 read:

1983 339.2816 Small County Road Assistance Program.—

1984 (3) Beginning with fiscal year ~~1999-2000 until fiscal year~~
 1985 ~~2009-2010, and beginning again with fiscal year 2012-2013, up to~~
 1986 \$25 million annually from the State Transportation Trust Fund
 1987 must may be used for the purposes of funding the Small County
 1988 Road Assistance Program as described in this section. In
 1989 addition, beginning with fiscal year 2025-2026, the department
 1990 must use the additional revenues allocated by s. 339.0801 for
 1991 the Small County Road Assistance Program.

1992 (4)(a) Small counties shall be eligible to compete for
 1993 funds that have been designated for the Small County Road
 1994 Assistance Program for resurfacing or reconstruction projects on
 1995 county roads that were part of the county road system on June
 1996 10, 1995. Capacity improvements on county roads are shall not be
 1997 eligible for funding under the program unless a safety issue
 1998 exists or the department finds it necessary to widen existing
 1999 lanes as part of a resurfacing or reconstruction project.

2000 (c) The following criteria must be used to prioritize road
 2001 projects for funding under the program:

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2002 1. The primary criterion is the physical condition of the
 2003 road as measured by the department.

2004 2. As secondary criteria the department may consider:

2005 a. Whether a road is used as an evacuation route.

2006 b. Whether a road has high levels of agricultural travel.

2007 c. Whether a road is considered a major arterial route.

2008 d. Whether a road is considered a feeder road.

2009 e. Whether a road is located in a fiscally constrained
 2010 county, as defined in s. 218.67(1).

2011 f. Other criteria related to the impact of a project on the
 2012 public road system or on the state or local economy as
 2013 determined by the department.

2014 Section 28. Subsections (1), (2), (3), (6), (7), and (8) of
 2015 section 339.2818, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

2016 339.2818 Small County Outreach Program.—

2017 (1) There is created within the department ~~of~~
 2018 ~~Transportation~~ the Small County Outreach Program. The purpose of
 2019 this program is to assist small county governments in repairing
 2020 or rehabilitating county bridges, paving unpaved roads,
 2021 addressing road-related drainage improvements, resurfacing or
 2022 reconstructing county roads, or constructing capacity or safety
 2023 improvements to county roads.

2024 (2) For the purposes of this section, the term "small
 2025 county" means any county that has a population of 200,000 or
 2026 less as determined by the most recent official population census
 2027 determination ~~estimate~~ pursuant to s. 186.901.

2028 ~~(3) Funds allocated under this program, pursuant to s. 4,~~
 2029 ~~ch. 2000-257, Laws of Florida, are in addition to any funds~~
 2030 ~~provided pursuant to s. 339.2816, for the Small County Road~~

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2031 ~~Assistance Program.~~

2032 (5)~~(6)~~ Funds paid into the State Transportation Trust Fund
 2033 pursuant to ss. 201.15, 320.072, and 339.0801 ~~s. 201.15~~ for the
 2034 purposes of the Small County Outreach Program are hereby
 2035 annually appropriated for expenditure to support the Small
 2036 County Outreach Program.

2037 (6)~~(7)~~ Subject to a specific appropriation in addition to
 2038 funds annually appropriated for projects under this section, a
 2039 municipality within a rural area of opportunity or a rural area
 2040 of opportunity community designated under s. 288.0656(7)(a) may
 2041 compete for the additional project funding using the criteria
 2042 listed in subsection (3) ~~(4)~~ at up to 100 percent of project
 2043 costs, excluding capacity improvement projects.

2044 ~~(8) Subject to a specific appropriation in addition to~~
 2045 ~~funds appropriated for projects under this section, a local~~
 2046 ~~government either wholly or partially within the Everglades~~
 2047 ~~Agricultural Area as defined in s. 373.4592(15), the Peace River~~
 2048 ~~Basin, or the Suwannee River Basin may compete for additional~~
 2049 ~~funding using the criteria listed in paragraph (4)(c) at up to~~
 2050 ~~100 percent of project costs on state or county roads used~~
 2051 ~~primarily as farm-to-market connections between rural~~
 2052 ~~agricultural areas and market distribution centers, excluding~~
 2053 ~~capacity improvement projects.~~

2054 Section 29. Section 339.68 is amended to read:

2055 (Substantial rewording of section.

2056 See s. 339.68, F.S., for present text.)

2057 339.68 Florida Arterial Road Modernization Program.—

2058 (1) The Legislature finds that increasing demands continue
 2059 to be placed on rural arterial roads in this state by a fast-

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2060 growing economy, continued population growth, and increased
2061 tourism. Investment in the rural arterial roads of this state is
2062 needed to maintain the safety, mobility, reliability, and
2063 resiliency of the transportation system in order to support the
2064 movement of people, goods, and commodities; to enhance economic
2065 prosperity and competitiveness; and to enrich the quality of
2066 life of the rural communities and the environment of this state.

2067 (2) The Florida Arterial Road Modernization Program is
2068 created within the department to make capacity and safety
2069 improvements to two-lane arterial roads located in rural
2070 communities. For purposes of this section, the term "rural
2071 community" has the same meaning as provided in s. 288.0656.

2072 (3) Beginning in the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the department
2073 shall allocate from the State Transportation Trust Fund a
2074 minimum of \$50 million in each fiscal year for purposes of
2075 funding the program. This funding is in addition to any other
2076 funding provided to the program by any other law.

2077 (4) The department shall use the following criteria to
2078 prioritize projects for funding under the program:

2079 (a) Whether the road has documented safety concerns or
2080 requires additional safety and design improvements. This may be
2081 evidenced by the number of fatalities or crashes per vehicle
2082 mile traveled.

2083 (b) Whether the road has or is projected to have a
2084 significant amount of truck tractor traffic as determined by the
2085 department. For purposes of this paragraph, the term "truck
2086 tractor" has the same meaning as in s. 320.01(11).

2087 (c) Whether the road is used to transport agricultural
2088 products and commodities from the farm to the market or other

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2089 sale or distribution point.

2090 (d) Whether the road is used to transport goods to or from
2091 warehouses, distribution centers, or intermodal logistics
2092 centers as defined in s. 311.101(2).

2093 (e) Whether the road is used as an evacuation route.

2094 (f) Whether the physical condition of the road meets
2095 department standards.

2096 (g) Whether the road currently has, or is projected to have
2097 within the next 5 years, a level of service of D, E, or F.

2098 (h) Any other criteria related to the impact of a project
2099 on the public road system or on the state or local economy as
2100 determined by the department.

2101 (5) By January 1, 2027, and every 2 years thereafter, the
2102 department shall submit to the Governor, the President of the
2103 Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a report
2104 regarding the use and condition of arterial roads located in
2105 rural communities, which report must include the following:

2106 (a) A map of roads located in rural communities which are
2107 designated as arterial roads.

2108 (b) A needs assessment that must include, but is not
2109 limited to, consideration of infrastructure improvements to
2110 improve capacity on arterial roads in rural communities.

2111 (c) A synopsis of the department's project prioritization
2112 process.

2113 (d) An estimate of the local and state economic impact of
2114 improving capacity on arterial roads in rural communities.

2115 (e) A listing of the arterial roads and the associated
2116 improvements to be included in the program and a schedule or
2117 timeline for the inclusion of such projects in the work program.

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2118 Section 30. (1) The Department of Transportation shall
 2119 allocate the additional funds provided by this act to implement
 2120 the Small County Road Assistance Program as created by s.
 2121 339.2816 and amend the current tentative work program for the
 2122 2025-2026 through 2031-2032 fiscal years to include additional
 2123 projects. In addition, before adoption of the work program, the
 2124 department shall submit a budget amendment pursuant to s.
 2125 339.135(7), Florida Statutes, requesting budget authority
 2126 necessary to implement the additional projects.

2127 (2) The department shall allocate sufficient funds to
 2128 implement the Florida Arterial Road Modernization Program,
 2129 develop a plan to expend the revenues as specified in s. 339.68,
 2130 Florida Statutes, and, before its adoption, amend the current
 2131 tentative work program for the 2025-2026 through 2031-2032
 2132 fiscal years to include the program's projects. In addition,
 2133 before adoption of the work program, the department shall submit
 2134 a budget amendment pursuant to s. 339.135(7), Florida Statutes,
 2135 requesting budget authority necessary to implement the program
 2136 as specified in s. 339.68, Florida Statutes.

2137 (3) Notwithstanding any other law, the increase in revenue
 2138 to the State Transportation Trust Fund derived from the
 2139 amendments to ss. 201.15 and 319.32, Florida Statutes, made by
 2140 this act and deposited into the trust fund pursuant to ss.
 2141 201.15 and 339.0801, Florida Statutes, shall be used by the
 2142 department to fund the programs as specified in this section.

2143 Section 31. Section 381.403, Florida Statutes, is created
 2144 to read:

2145 381.403 Rural Access to Primary and Preventive Care Grant
 2146 Program.—The Legislature recognizes that access to primary and

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2147 preventive health care is critical for the well-being of the
2148 residents of this state. The Legislature also recognizes that
2149 many rural areas of this state have significantly fewer
2150 available physicians and autonomous advanced practice registered
2151 nurses who serve those areas. To increase the availability of
2152 health care in such underserved rural areas, there is created
2153 the Rural Access to Primary and Preventive Care Grant Program
2154 within the Department of Health to use grants to incentivize
2155 physicians and autonomous advanced practice registered nurses to
2156 open or expand practices in those areas.

2157 (1) As used in this section, the term:

2158 (a) "Autonomous advanced practice registered nurse" means
2159 an advanced practice registered nurse who is registered under s.
2160 464.0123 to engage in autonomous practice.

2161 (b) "Majority ownership" means ownership of more than 50
2162 percent of the interests in a private practice.

2163 (c) "Physician" means a physician licensed under chapter
2164 458 or chapter 459.

2165 (d) "Preventive care" means routine health care services
2166 designed to prevent illness. The term includes, but is not
2167 limited to, general physical examinations provided on an annual
2168 basis, screenings for acute or chronic illnesses, and patient
2169 counseling to promote overall wellness and avoid the need for
2170 emergency services.

2171 (e) "Primary care" means health care services focused
2172 primarily on preventive care, wellness care, and treatment for
2173 common illnesses. The term may include the health care provider
2174 serving as a patient's entry point into the overall health care
2175 system and coordinating a patient's care among specialists or

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2176 acute care settings. The term does not include elective services
2177 provided solely for cosmetic purposes.

2178 (f) "Program" means the Rural Access to Primary and
2179 Preventive Care Grant Program.

2180 (g) "Qualifying rural area" means a rural community as
2181 defined in s. 288.0657 in this state which is also designated as
2182 a health professional shortage area by the Health Resources and
2183 Services Administration of the United States Department of
2184 Health and Human Services.

2185 (2) The department shall award grants under the program to
2186 physicians and autonomous advanced practice registered nurses
2187 who intend to open a new private practice in a qualifying rural
2188 area or who intend to open a new location within a qualifying
2189 rural area if the current private practice is located in a
2190 different county. To qualify for a grant, an applicant must meet
2191 all of the following criteria:

2192 (a) The practice must:

2193 1. Have majority ownership by physicians or autonomous
2194 advanced practice registered nurses. Majority ownership may
2195 include up to five physicians or autonomous advanced practice
2196 registered nurses in partnership.

2197 2. Be physically located in a qualifying rural area and
2198 serve at that location patients who live in that qualifying
2199 rural area or in other nearby qualifying rural areas. While the
2200 practice may use telehealth to supplement the services provided
2201 at the location, the majority of services provided by the
2202 practice must be provided at the physical location.

2203 3. Accept Medicaid patients.

2204 4. Provide services in one or more of the following

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2205 specialties:

2206 a. If the practice has majority ownership by one or more
2207 autonomous advanced practice registered nurses, provide services
2208 solely in primary or preventive care.

2209 b. If the practice has majority ownership by one or more
2210 physicians, provide services in primary care, obstetrics,
2211 gynecology, general and family practice, geriatrics, internal
2212 medicine, pediatrics, or psychiatry.

2213 (b) The owners of the practice must commit to providing the
2214 following information to the department on an annual basis, and
2215 upon request by the department:

2216 1. Deidentified patient encounter data.

2217 2. A detailed report on the use of grant funds until such
2218 funds are expended.

2219 (3) By March 1, 2026, the department shall create an
2220 application process for eligible physicians and autonomous
2221 advanced practice registered nurses to apply for grants under
2222 the program. The application must require a detailed budget of
2223 anticipated use of grant funds and how the new or existing
2224 practice will meet the requirements of subsection (2). The
2225 department shall establish a ranking system to determine which
2226 applicants will be awarded grants if there are more applicants
2227 for the program than can be awarded grants with available
2228 appropriated funds.

2229 (4) Subject to specific appropriation, the department may
2230 award grants of up to \$250,000 to eligible applicants. Only one
2231 grant may be awarded per practice. Grant funds awarded for
2232 establishing a new private practice or a new practice location
2233 may be used for any of the following expenses:

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- 2234 (a) Facility construction, acquisition, renovation, or
2235 lease.
- 2236 (b) Purchasing medical equipment.
- 2237 (c) Purchasing or implementing information technology
2238 equipment or services.
- 2239 (d) Purchasing or implementing telehealth technology.
- 2240 (e) Training on the use of medical equipment, information
2241 technology, or telehealth technology implemented under paragraph
2242 (b), paragraph (c), or paragraph (d), respectively.
- 2243 (5) Grant funds may not be used for any of the following:
- 2244 (a) Salaries.
- 2245 (b) Utilities.
- 2246 (c) Internet or telecommunications services other than
2247 those necessary for implementing telehealth technology under
2248 paragraph (4) (d).
- 2249 (d) Insurance.
- 2250 (e) Incidental maintenance and repairs.
- 2251 (f) Disposable medical supplies.
- 2252 (g) Medicines or vaccines.
- 2253 (h) Licensing or certification fees, including costs for
2254 continuing education other than training under paragraph (4) (e).
- 2255 (6) The department shall enter into a contract with each
2256 grant recipient which details the requirements for the
2257 expenditure of grant funds for that recipient. The contract must
2258 include, at a minimum, all of the following:
- 2259 (a) The purpose of the contract.
- 2260 (b) Specific performance standards and responsibilities for
2261 the recipient under the contract, including penalties for not
2262 meeting such performance standards and responsibilities.

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- 2263 (c) A detailed project or contract budget, if applicable.
- 2264 (d) Reporting requirements for grant recipients to provide
2265 information to the department under paragraph (2)(b) as well as
2266 any additional information the department deems necessary for
2267 the administration of the program.
- 2268 (7) The department may adopt rules to implement the
2269 program.
- 2270 (8) Beginning July 1, 2026, and each year thereafter in
2271 which there are outstanding contracts with grant recipients
2272 under subsection (6), the department shall provide a report to
2273 the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of
2274 the House of Representatives which includes, but need not be
2275 limited to, all of the following:
- 2276 (a) Each grant awarded, including the proposed uses for
2277 each grant.
- 2278 (b) The progress on each outstanding contract.
- 2279 (c) The number of patients residing in rural areas who were
2280 served by grant awardees.
- 2281 (d) The number of Medicaid recipients who were served by
2282 grant awardees.
- 2283 (e) The number and types of services provided during
2284 patient encounters in locations opened under the program.
- 2285 (f) The number of health care practitioners, delineated by
2286 licensure type, providing services in locations opened under the
2287 program.
- 2288 (9) This section is repealed July 1, 2035, unless reviewed
2289 and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature.
- 2290 Section 32. Section 381.9856, Florida Statutes, is created
2291 to read:

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2292 381.9856 Stroke, Cardiac, and Obstetric Response and
2293 Education Grant Program.—

2294 (1) PROGRAM CREATION.—The Stroke, Cardiac, and Obstetric
2295 Response and Education (SCORE) Grant Program is created within
2296 the Department of Health.

2297 (2) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the program is to improve
2298 patient outcomes and the coordination of emergency medical care
2299 in rural communities by increasing access to high-quality
2300 stroke, cardiac, and obstetric care through the application of
2301 technology and innovative training, such as blended learning
2302 training programs. Blended learning training programs ensure
2303 that participants gain both the theoretical foundations of
2304 diagnosis and management as well as real-world clinical
2305 experience through scenario-based learning, ultimately enhancing
2306 decisionmaking and patient outcomes.

2307 (3) DEFINITIONS.—As used in this section, the term:

2308 (a) “Blended learning training program” means a structured
2309 educational model that uses blended learning methodologies,
2310 including simulation-based training, virtual reality, and
2311 distance learning technologies, in conjunction with hands-on
2312 instruction, such as simulation-based practice, and in-person
2313 skills sessions to provide comprehensive education.

2314 (b) “High-risk care provider” means a licensed health care
2315 facility or licensed ambulance service that regularly provides
2316 emergency or ongoing care to patients experiencing a stroke,
2317 heart attack, or pregnancy-related emergency.

2318 (c) “Rural community” has the same meaning as provided in
2319 s. 288.0657.

2320 (4) GRANT PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.—

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2321 (a) The department shall award grants to high-risk care
2322 providers serving rural communities to accomplish at least one
2323 of the following initiatives:

2324 1. Implement a blended learning training program for health
2325 care providers in stroke care protocols and best practices.

2326 2. Purchase simulation equipment and technology for
2327 training.

2328 3. Establish telehealth capabilities between prehospital
2329 providers, such as paramedics or emergency medical technicians,
2330 and in-hospital providers, such as neurologists, to expedite
2331 emergency stroke care, emergency cardiac care, or emergency
2332 obstetric care.

2333 4. Develop quality improvement programs in one or more of
2334 the following specialty areas: emergency stroke care, emergency
2335 cardiac care, or emergency obstetric care.

2336 (b) Priority must be given to proposals that:

2337 1. Demonstrate collaboration between prehospital and in-
2338 hospital providers; or

2339 2. Show potential for significant improvement in patient
2340 outcomes in rural communities.

2341 (5) FUNDING LIMITS; REPORTING.—

2342 (a) Individual grants may not exceed \$100,000 per year.

2343 (b) Grant recipients must submit quarterly reports to the
2344 department documenting program activities, expenditures, and
2345 outcomes.

2346 (6) ADMINISTRATION.—The department shall monitor program
2347 implementation and outcomes. The department shall submit an
2348 annual report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and
2349 the Speaker of the House of Representatives by December 1 of

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2350 each year, detailing program implementation and outcomes.

2351 (7) RULEMAKING.—The department may adopt rules to implement
2352 this section.

2353 (8) IMPLEMENTATION.—This section may be implemented only to
2354 the extent specifically funded by legislative appropriation.

2355 (9) REPEAL.—This section is repealed July 1, 2030, unless
2356 reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the
2357 Legislature.

2358 Section 33. Subsection (2) of section 395.6061, Florida
2359 Statutes, is amended to read:

2360 395.6061 Rural hospital capital improvement.—There is
2361 established a rural hospital capital improvement grant program.

2362 (2) (a) Each rural hospital as defined in s. 395.602 shall
2363 receive a minimum of \$100,000 annually, subject to legislative
2364 appropriation, upon application to the Department of Health, for
2365 projects to acquire, repair, improve, or upgrade systems,
2366 facilities, or equipment. Such projects may include, but are not
2367 limited to, the following:

2368 1. Establishing mobile care units to provide primary care
2369 services, behavioral health services, or obstetric and
2370 gynecological services in rural health professional shortage
2371 areas.

2372 2. Establishing telehealth kiosks to provide urgent care
2373 and primary care services remotely in rural health professional
2374 shortage areas.

2375 (b) As used in this subsection, the term:

2376 1. "Preventive care" means routine health care services
2377 designed to prevent illness. The term includes, but is not
2378 limited to, general physical examinations provided on an annual

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2379 basis, screenings for acute or chronic illnesses, and patient
2380 counseling to promote overall wellness and avoid the need for
2381 emergency services.

2382 2. "Primary care" means health care services focused
2383 primarily on preventive care, wellness care, and treatment for
2384 common illnesses. The term may include the health care provider
2385 serving as a patient's entry point into the overall health care
2386 system and coordinating a patient's care among specialists or
2387 acute care settings. The term does not include elective services
2388 provided solely for cosmetic purposes.

2389 3. "Rural health professional shortage area" means a rural
2390 community as defined in s. 288.0657 which is also designated as
2391 a health professional shortage area by the Health Resources and
2392 Services Administration of the United States Department of
2393 Health and Human Services.

2394 Section 34. Subsection (3) of section 420.9073, Florida
2395 Statutes, is amended to read:

2396 420.9073 Local housing distributions.—

2397 (3) Calculation of guaranteed amounts:

2398 (a) The guaranteed amount under subsection (1) shall be
2399 calculated for each state fiscal year by multiplying \$1 million
2400 ~~\$350,000~~ by a fraction, the numerator of which is the amount of
2401 funds distributed to the Local Government Housing Trust Fund
2402 pursuant to s. 201.15(4)(c) and the denominator of which is the
2403 total amount of funds distributed to the Local Government
2404 Housing Trust Fund pursuant to s. 201.15.

2405 (b) The guaranteed amount under subsection (2) shall be
2406 calculated for each state fiscal year by multiplying \$1 million
2407 ~~\$350,000~~ by a fraction, the numerator of which is the amount of

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2408 funds distributed to the Local Government Housing Trust Fund
2409 pursuant to s. 201.15(4) (d) and the denominator of which is the
2410 total amount of funds distributed to the Local Government
2411 Housing Trust Fund pursuant to s. 201.15.

2412 Section 35. Paragraph (n) of subsection (5) of section
2413 420.9075, Florida Statutes, is amended, paragraph (o) is added
2414 to that subsection, and paragraph (b) of subsection (13) of that
2415 section is reenacted, to read:

2416 420.9075 Local housing assistance plans; partnerships.—

2417 (5) The following criteria apply to awards made to eligible
2418 sponsors or eligible persons for the purpose of providing
2419 eligible housing:

2420 (n) Funds from the local housing distribution not used to
2421 meet the criteria established in paragraph (a), ~~or~~ paragraph
2422 (c), or paragraph (o), or not used for the administration of a
2423 local housing assistance plan must be used for housing
2424 production and finance activities, including, but not limited
2425 to, financing preconstruction activities or the purchase of
2426 existing units, providing rental housing, and providing home
2427 ownership training to prospective home buyers and owners of
2428 homes assisted through the local housing assistance plan.

2429 1. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraphs (a) and
2430 (c), program income as defined in s. 420.9071(26) may also be
2431 used to fund activities described in this paragraph.

2432 2. When preconstruction due-diligence activities conducted
2433 as part of a preservation strategy show that preservation of the
2434 units is not feasible and will not result in the production of
2435 an eligible unit, such costs shall be deemed a program expense
2436 rather than an administrative expense if such program expenses

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2437 do not exceed 3 percent of the annual local housing
2438 distribution.

2439 3. If both an award under the local housing assistance plan
2440 and federal low-income housing tax credits are used to assist a
2441 project and there is a conflict between the criteria prescribed
2442 in this subsection and the requirements of s. 42 of the Internal
2443 Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, the county or eligible
2444 municipality may resolve the conflict by giving precedence to
2445 the requirements of s. 42 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986,
2446 as amended, in lieu of following the criteria prescribed in this
2447 subsection with the exception of paragraphs (a) and (g) of this
2448 subsection.

2449 4. Each county and each eligible municipality may award
2450 funds as a grant for construction, rehabilitation, or repair as
2451 part of disaster recovery or emergency repairs or to remedy
2452 accessibility or health and safety deficiencies. Any other
2453 grants must be approved as part of the local housing assistance
2454 plan.

2455 (o) Notwithstanding paragraphs (a) and (c), up to 25
2456 percent of the funds made available in each county and eligible
2457 municipality from the local housing distribution may be used to
2458 preserve multifamily affordable rental housing funded through
2459 United States Department of Agriculture loans. These funds may
2460 be used to rehabilitate housing, extend affordability periods,
2461 or acquire or transfer properties in partnership with private
2462 organizations. This paragraph expires on June 30, 2031.

2463 (13)

2464 (b) If, as a result of its review of the annual report, the
2465 corporation determines that a county or eligible municipality

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2466 has failed to implement a local housing incentive strategy, or,
2467 if applicable, a local housing incentive plan, it shall send a
2468 notice of termination of the local government's share of the
2469 local housing distribution by certified mail to the affected
2470 county or eligible municipality.

2471 1. The notice must specify a date of termination of the
2472 funding if the affected county or eligible municipality does not
2473 implement the plan or strategy and provide for a local response.
2474 A county or eligible municipality shall respond to the
2475 corporation within 30 days after receipt of the notice of
2476 termination.

2477 2. The corporation shall consider the local response that
2478 extenuating circumstances precluded implementation and grant an
2479 extension to the timeframe for implementation. Such an extension
2480 shall be made in the form of an extension agreement that
2481 provides a timeframe for implementation. The chief elected
2482 official of a county or eligible municipality or his or her
2483 designee shall have the authority to enter into the agreement on
2484 behalf of the local government.

2485 3. If the county or the eligible municipality has not
2486 implemented the incentive strategy or entered into an extension
2487 agreement by the termination date specified in the notice, the
2488 local housing distribution share terminates, and any uncommitted
2489 local housing distribution funds held by the affected county or
2490 eligible municipality in its local housing assistance trust fund
2491 shall be transferred to the Local Government Housing Trust Fund
2492 to the credit of the corporation to administer.

2493 4.a. If the affected local government fails to meet the
2494 timeframes specified in the agreement, the corporation shall

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2495 terminate funds. The corporation shall send a notice of
2496 termination of the local government's share of the local housing
2497 distribution by certified mail to the affected local government.
2498 The notice shall specify the termination date, and any
2499 uncommitted funds held by the affected local government shall be
2500 transferred to the Local Government Housing Trust Fund to the
2501 credit of the corporation to administer.

2502 b. If the corporation terminates funds to a county, but an
2503 eligible municipality receiving a local housing distribution
2504 pursuant to an interlocal agreement maintains compliance with
2505 program requirements, the corporation shall thereafter
2506 distribute directly to the participating eligible municipality
2507 its share calculated in the manner provided in ss. 420.9072 and
2508 420.9073.

2509 c. Any county or eligible municipality whose local
2510 distribution share has been terminated may subsequently elect to
2511 receive directly its local distribution share by adopting the
2512 ordinance, resolution, and local housing assistance plan in the
2513 manner and according to the procedures provided in ss. 420.907-
2514 420.9079.

2515 Section 36. Subsections (1), (2), and (5) of section
2516 1001.451, Florida Statutes, are amended, and subsection (6) is
2517 added to that section, to read:

2518 1001.451 Regional consortium service organizations.—In
2519 order to provide a full range of programs to larger numbers of
2520 students, minimize duplication of services, and encourage the
2521 development of new programs and services:

2522 (1) School districts with 20,000 or fewer unweighted full-
2523 time equivalent students, developmental research (laboratory)

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2524 schools established pursuant to s. 1002.32, and the Florida
 2525 School for the Deaf and the Blind may enter into cooperative
 2526 agreements to form a regional consortium service organization.
 2527 Each regional consortium service organization shall provide any
 2528 of, at a minimum, three of the following services determined
 2529 necessary and appropriate by the board of directors:

- 2530 (a) Exceptional student education;
 2531 (b) Safe schools support ~~teacher education centers;~~
 2532 environmental education;
 2533 (c) State and federal grant procurement and coordination;
 2534 (d) Data services ~~processing; health~~
 2535 (e) Insurance services;
 2536 (f) Risk management ~~insurance~~;
 2537 (g) Professional learning;
 2538 (h) College, career, and workforce development;
 2539 (i) Business and operational services ~~staff development~~;
 2540 (j) Purchasing; or
 2541 (k) Planning and accountability.

2542 (2)(a) Each regional consortium service organization that
 2543 consists of four or more school districts is eligible to
 2544 receive, through the Department of Education, subject to the
 2545 funds provided in the General Appropriations Act, an allocation
 2546 ~~incentive grant~~ of \$150,000 ~~\$50,000~~ per school district and
 2547 eligible member to be used for the delivery of services within
 2548 ~~the~~ participating school districts. The determination of
 2549 services and use of such funds must ~~shall~~ be established by the
 2550 board of directors of the regional consortium service
 2551 organization. The funds must ~~shall~~ be distributed to each
 2552 regional consortium service organization no later than 30 days

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2553 following the release of the funds to the department. Each
2554 regional consortium service organization shall submit an annual
2555 report to the department regarding the use of funds for
2556 consortia services. Unexpended amounts in any fund in a
2557 consortium's current year operating budget must be carried
2558 forward and included as the balance forward for that fund in the
2559 approved operating budget for the following year. Each regional
2560 consortium service organization shall provide quarterly
2561 financial reports to member districts.

2562 (b) Member districts shall designate a district that will
2563 serve as a fiscal agent for contractual and reporting purposes.
2564 Such fiscal agent district is entitled to reasonable
2565 compensation for accounting and other services performed. The
2566 regional consortium service organization shall retain all funds
2567 received from grants or contracted services to cover indirect or
2568 administrative costs associated with the provision of such
2569 services. The regional consortium service organization board of
2570 directors shall determine the products and services to be
2571 provided by the consortium; however, in all contractual matters,
2572 the school board of the fiscal agent district shall act on
2573 proposed actions of the regional consortium service
2574 organization.

2575 (c) The regional consortium service organization board of
2576 directors shall recommend establishment of positions and
2577 individuals for appointment to the fiscal agent district.
2578 Personnel must be employed under the personnel policies of the
2579 fiscal agent district and are deemed to be public employees of
2580 the fiscal agent district. The regional consortium service
2581 organization board of directors may recommend a salary schedule

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2582 and job descriptions specific to its personnel.

2583 (d) The regional consortium service organization may
2584 purchase or lease property and facilities essential for its
2585 operations and is responsible for their maintenance and
2586 associated overhead costs.

2587 (e) If a regional consortium service organization is
2588 dissolved, any revenue from the sale of assets must be
2589 distributed among the member districts as determined by the
2590 board of directors ~~Application for incentive grants shall be~~
2591 ~~made to the Commissioner of Education by July 30 of each year~~
2592 ~~for distribution to qualifying regional consortium service~~
2593 ~~organizations by January 1 of the fiscal year.~~

2594 (5) The board of directors of a regional consortium service
2595 organization may use various means to generate revenue in
2596 support of its activities, including, but not limited to,
2597 contracting for services to nonmember districts. The board of
2598 directors may acquire, enjoy, use, and dispose of patents,
2599 copyrights, and trademarks and any licenses and associated ~~other~~
2600 rights or interests ~~thereunder or therein~~. Ownership of all such
2601 patents, copyrights, trademarks, licenses, and associated rights
2602 or interests ~~thereunder or therein~~ shall vest in the state, with
2603 the board of directors having full right of use and full right
2604 to retain associated ~~the revenues derived therefrom~~. Any funds
2605 realized from contracted services, patents, copyrights,
2606 trademarks, or licenses are ~~shall be~~ considered internal funds
2607 as provided in s. 1011.07. A fund balance must be established
2608 for maintaining or expanding services, facilities maintenance,
2609 terminal pay, and other liabilities ~~Such funds shall be used to~~
2610 ~~support the organization's marketing and research and~~

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2611 ~~development activities in order to improve and increase services~~
2612 ~~to its member districts.~~

2613 (6) A regional consortium service organization is
2614 authorized to administer the Regional Consortia Service
2615 Organization Supplemental Services Program under s. 1001.4511.

2616 Section 37. Section 1001.4511, Florida Statutes, is created
2617 to read:

2618 1001.4511 Regional Consortia Service Organization
2619 Supplemental Services Program.—

2620 (1) There is created the Regional Consortia Service
2621 Organization Supplemental Services Program to increase the
2622 ability of regional consortium service organizations under s.
2623 1001.451 to provide programs and services to consortia members
2624 through cooperative agreements. Program funds may be used to
2625 supplement member needs related to transportation; district
2626 finance personnel services; property insurance; cybersecurity
2627 support; school safety; college, career, and workforce
2628 development; academic support; and behavior support within
2629 exceptional student education services.

2630 (2) Each regional consortium service organization shall
2631 annually report to the President of the Senate and the Speaker
2632 of the House of Representatives the distribution of funds,
2633 including members awarded and services provided.

2634 (3) Notwithstanding s. 216.301 and pursuant to s. 216.351,
2635 funds allocated for this purpose which are not disbursed by June
2636 30 of the fiscal year in which the funds are allocated may be
2637 carried forward for up to 5 years after the effective date of
2638 the original appropriation.

2639 Section 38. Section 1009.635, Florida Statutes, is created

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2640 to read:

2641 1009.635 Rural Incentive for Professional Educators.-

2642 (1) ESTABLISHMENT.-The Rural Incentive for Professional
2643 Educators (RIPE) Program is established within the Department of
2644 Education to support the recruitment and retention of qualified
2645 instructional personnel in rural communities. The program shall
2646 provide financial assistance for the repayment of student loans
2647 for eligible participants who establish permanent residency and
2648 employment in rural areas of opportunity.

2649 (2) ELIGIBILITY.-An individual is eligible to participate
2650 in the RIPE Program if he or she does all of the following:

2651 (a) Establishes permanent residency on or after July 1,
2652 2025, in a rural area of opportunity as designated pursuant to
2653 s. 288.0656. The address on an individual's state-issued
2654 identification card or driver license is evidence of residence.

2655 (b) Secures full-time employment as a teacher or
2656 administrator in a private school as defined in s. 1002.01, or
2657 as instructional or administrative personnel as those terms are
2658 defined in s. 1012.01(2) and (3), respectively, in the public
2659 school district located within the same rural area of
2660 opportunity as he or she resides.

2661 (c) Holds an associate degree, bachelor's degree,
2662 postgraduate degree, or certificate from an accredited
2663 institution earned before establishing residency.

2664 (d) Has an active student loan balance incurred for the
2665 completion of the qualifying degree or certificate.

2666 (3) LOAN REPAYMENT.-Eligible participants may receive up to
2667 \$15,000 in total student loan repayment assistance over 5 years,
2668 disbursed in annual payments not to exceed \$3,000 per year.

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2669 Payments shall be made directly to the lender servicing the
2670 participant's student loan.

2671 (4) AWARD DISTRIBUTION.—Before disbursement of an award,
2672 the department shall verify that the participant:

2673 (a) Has maintained continuous employment with the school
2674 district in an instructional or administrative position;

2675 (b) Has received a rating of effective or highly effective
2676 pursuant to s. 1012.34; and

2677 (c) Has not been placed on probation, had his or her
2678 certificate suspended or revoked, or been placed on the
2679 disqualification list, pursuant to s. 1012.796.

2680 (5) ADMINISTRATION.—The program shall be administered by
2681 the Office of Student Financial Assistance within the Department
2682 of Education, which shall:

2683 (a) Develop application procedures requiring documentation,
2684 including proof of residency, verification of employment,
2685 official academic transcripts, and details of outstanding
2686 student loans.

2687 (b) Monitor compliance with program requirements.

2688 (6) RULEMAKING.—The State Board of Education shall adopt
2689 rules no later than January 31, 2026, to administer this
2690 section.

2691 Section 39. Subsection (3) of section 1013.62, Florida
2692 Statutes, is amended to read:

2693 1013.62 Charter schools capital outlay funding.—

2694 (3) If the school board levies the discretionary millage
2695 authorized in s. 1011.71(2), the department must ~~shall~~ use the
2696 following calculation methodology to determine the amount of
2697 revenue that a school district must distribute to each eligible

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2698 charter school:

2699 (a) Reduce the total discretionary millage revenue by the
2700 school district's annual debt service obligation incurred as of
2701 March 1, 2017, which has not been subsequently retired, and:

2702 1. Beginning in the 2025-2026 fiscal year, for any district
2703 with an active project or an outstanding participation
2704 requirement balance, any amount of participation requirement
2705 pursuant to s. 1013.64(2)(a)8. that is being satisfied by
2706 revenues raised by the discretionary millage; or

2707 2. For construction projects for which Special Facilities
2708 Construction Account funding is sought beginning in the 2025-
2709 2026 fiscal year, the value of 1 mill from the revenue generated
2710 pursuant to s. 1013.64(2)(a)8.b.

2711 (b) Divide the school district's adjusted discretionary
2712 millage revenue by the district's total capital outlay full-time
2713 equivalent membership and the total number of full-time
2714 equivalent students of each eligible charter school to determine
2715 a capital outlay allocation per full-time equivalent student.

2716 (c) Multiply the capital outlay allocation per full-time
2717 equivalent student by the total number of full-time equivalent
2718 students of each eligible charter school to determine the
2719 capital outlay allocation for each charter school.

2720 (d) If applicable, reduce the capital outlay allocation
2721 identified in paragraph (c) by the total amount of state funds
2722 allocated to each eligible charter school in subsection (2) to
2723 determine the maximum calculated capital outlay allocation. The
2724 amount of funds a school district must distribute to charter
2725 schools shall be as follows:

2726 1. For fiscal year 2023-2024, the amount is 20 percent of

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2727 the amount calculated under this paragraph.

2728 2. For fiscal year 2024-2025, the amount is 40 percent of
2729 the amount calculated under this paragraph.

2730 3. For fiscal year 2025-2026, the amount is 60 percent of
2731 the amount calculated under this paragraph.

2732 4. For fiscal year 2026-2027, the amount is 80 percent of
2733 the amount calculated under this paragraph.

2734 5. For fiscal year 2027-2028, and each fiscal year
2735 thereafter, the amount is 100 percent of the amount calculated
2736 under this paragraph.

2737 (e) School districts shall distribute capital outlay funds
2738 to eligible charter schools no later than February 1 of each
2739 year, as required by this subsection, based on the amount of
2740 funds received by the district school board. School districts
2741 shall distribute any remaining capital outlay funds, as required
2742 by this subsection, upon the receipt of such funds until the
2743 total amount calculated pursuant to this subsection is
2744 distributed.

2745
2746 By October 1 of each year, each school district shall certify to
2747 the department the amount of debt service that ~~and participation~~
2748 ~~requirement that complies with the requirement of paragraph (a)~~
2749 ~~and~~ can be reduced from the total discretionary millage revenue.
2750 Each school district shall also certify the amount of the
2751 participation requirement that complies with paragraph (a), or
2752 certify the value of 1 mill from revenue generated pursuant to
2753 s. 1013.64(2)(a)8.b. that can be reduced from the total
2754 discretionary millage revenue, as applicable. The Auditor
2755 General shall verify compliance with the requirements of

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2756 paragraph (a) and s. 1011.71(2)(e) during scheduled operational
2757 audits of school districts.

2758 Section 40. Paragraph (a) of subsection (2) of section
2759 1013.64, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

2760 1013.64 Funds for comprehensive educational plant needs;
2761 construction cost maximums for school district capital
2762 projects.—Allocations from the Public Education Capital Outlay
2763 and Debt Service Trust Fund to the various boards for capital
2764 outlay projects shall be determined as follows:

2765 (2)(a) The department shall establish, as a part of the
2766 Public Education Capital Outlay and Debt Service Trust Fund, a
2767 separate account, in an amount determined by the Legislature, to
2768 be known as the "Special Facility Construction Account." The
2769 Special Facility Construction Account shall be used to provide
2770 necessary construction funds to school districts which have
2771 urgent construction needs but which lack sufficient resources at
2772 present, and cannot reasonably anticipate sufficient resources
2773 within the period of the next 3 years, for these purposes from
2774 currently authorized sources of capital outlay revenue. A school
2775 district requesting funding from the Special Facility
2776 Construction Account shall submit one specific construction
2777 project, not to exceed one complete educational plant, to the
2778 Special Facility Construction Committee. A district may not
2779 receive funding for more than one approved project in any 3-year
2780 period ~~or while any portion of the district's participation~~
2781 ~~requirement is outstanding~~. The first year of the 3-year period
2782 shall be the first year a district receives an appropriation.
2783 The department shall encourage a construction program that
2784 reduces the average size of schools in the district. The request

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2785 must meet the following criteria to be considered by the
2786 committee:

2787 1. The project must be deemed a critical need and must be
2788 recommended for funding by the Special Facility Construction
2789 Committee. Before developing construction plans for the proposed
2790 facility, the district school board must request a
2791 preapplication review by the Special Facility Construction
2792 Committee or a project review subcommittee convened by the chair
2793 of the committee to include two representatives of the
2794 department and two staff members from school districts not
2795 eligible to participate in the program. A school district may
2796 request a preapplication review at any time; however, if the
2797 district school board seeks inclusion in the department's next
2798 annual capital outlay legislative budget request, the
2799 preapplication review request must be made before February 1.
2800 Within 90 days after receiving the preapplication review
2801 request, the committee or subcommittee must meet in the school
2802 district to review the project proposal and existing facilities.
2803 To determine whether the proposed project is a critical need,
2804 the committee or subcommittee shall consider, at a minimum, the
2805 capacity of all existing facilities within the district as
2806 determined by the Florida Inventory of School Houses; the
2807 district's pattern of student growth; the district's existing
2808 and projected capital outlay full-time equivalent student
2809 enrollment as determined by the demographic, revenue, and
2810 education estimating conferences established in s. 216.136; the
2811 district's existing satisfactory student stations; the use of
2812 all existing district property and facilities; grade level
2813 configurations; and any other information that may affect the

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2814 need for the proposed project.

2815 2. The construction project must be recommended in the most
2816 recent survey or survey amendment cooperatively prepared by the
2817 district and the department, and approved by the department
2818 under the rules of the State Board of Education. If a district
2819 employs a consultant in the preparation of a survey or survey
2820 amendment, the consultant may not be employed by or receive
2821 compensation from a third party that designs or constructs a
2822 project recommended by the survey.

2823 3. The construction project must appear on the district's
2824 approved project priority list under the rules of the State
2825 Board of Education.

2826 4. The district must have selected and had approved a site
2827 for the construction project in compliance with s. 1013.36 and
2828 the rules of the State Board of Education.

2829 5. The district shall have developed a district school
2830 board adopted list of facilities that do not exceed the norm for
2831 net square feet occupancy requirements under the State
2832 Requirements for Educational Facilities, using all possible
2833 programmatic combinations for multiple use of space to obtain
2834 maximum daily use of all spaces within the facility under
2835 consideration.

2836 6. Upon construction, the total cost per student station,
2837 including change orders, must not exceed the cost per student
2838 station as provided in subsection (6) unless approved by the
2839 Special Facility Construction Committee. At the discretion of
2840 the committee, costs that exceed the cost per student station
2841 for special facilities may include legal and administrative
2842 fees, the cost of site improvements or related offsite

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2843 improvements, the cost of complying with public shelter and
2844 hurricane hardening requirements, cost overruns created by a
2845 disaster as defined in s. 252.34(2), costs of security
2846 enhancements approved by the school safety specialist, and
2847 unforeseeable circumstances beyond the district's control.

2848 7. There shall be an agreement signed by the district
2849 school board stating that it will advertise for bids within 30
2850 days of receipt of its encumbrance authorization from the
2851 department.

2852 8.a.(I) For construction projects for which Special
2853 Facilities Construction Account funding is sought before the
2854 2019-2020 fiscal year, the district shall, at the time of the
2855 request and for a continuing period necessary to meet the
2856 district's participation requirement, levy the maximum millage
2857 against its nonexempt assessed property value as allowed in s.
2858 1011.71(2) or shall raise an equivalent amount of revenue from
2859 the school capital outlay surtax authorized under s. 212.055(6).

2860 (II) Beginning with construction projects for which Special
2861 Facilities Construction Account funding is sought in the 2019-
2862 2020 fiscal year, the district shall, for a minimum of 3 years
2863 before submitting the request and for a continuing period
2864 necessary to meet its participation requirement, levy the
2865 maximum millage against the district's nonexempt assessed
2866 property value as authorized under s. 1011.71(2) or shall raise
2867 an equivalent amount of revenue from the school capital outlay
2868 surtax authorized under s. 212.055(6).

2869 (III) Beginning with the 2025-2026 fiscal year, any
2870 district with an ~~a new or~~ active project or an outstanding
2871 participation requirement balance, funded under ~~the provisions~~

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2872 ~~of~~ this subsection, shall be required to budget no more than the
2873 value of 1 mill per year to the project until the district's
2874 participation requirement relating to the local discretionary
2875 capital improvement millage or the equivalent amount of revenue
2876 from the school capital outlay surtax is satisfied.

2877 b. For construction projects for which Special Facilities
2878 Construction Account funding is sought beginning in the 2025-
2879 2026 fiscal year, the district shall, for a minimum of 3 years
2880 before submitting the request and for the initial year of the
2881 appropriation and the two years following the initial
2882 appropriation, levy the maximum millage against the district's
2883 nonexempt assessed property value as authorized under s.
2884 1011.71(2) or shall raise an equivalent amount of revenue from
2885 the school capital outlay surtax authorized under s. 212.055(6).
2886 The district is not required to budget the funds toward the
2887 project, but must use the funds as authorized pursuant to s.
2888 1011.71 or s. 212.055(6), as applicable.

2889 9. If a contract has not been signed 90 days after the
2890 advertising of bids, the funding for the specific project must
2891 ~~shall~~ revert to the Special Facility New Construction Account to
2892 be reallocated to other projects on the list. However, an
2893 additional 90 days may be granted by the commissioner.

2894 10. The department shall certify the inability of the
2895 district to fund the survey-recommended project over a
2896 continuous 3-year period using projected capital outlay revenue
2897 derived from s. 9(d), Art. XII of the State Constitution, as
2898 amended, paragraph (3)(a) of this section, and s. 1011.71(2).

2899 11.a. For projects funded before the 2025-2026 fiscal year,
2900 the district shall have on file with the department an adopted

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2901 resolution acknowledging its commitment to satisfy its
2902 participation requirement, which is equivalent to all
2903 unencumbered and future revenue acquired from s. 9(d), Art. XII
2904 of the State Constitution, as amended, paragraph (3)(a) of this
2905 section, and s. 1011.71(2), in the year of the initial
2906 appropriation and for the 2 years immediately following the
2907 initial appropriation.

2908 b. For projects funded during the 2025-2026 fiscal year,
2909 and thereafter, the district shall have on file with the
2910 department an adopted resolution acknowledging its commitment to
2911 comply with the requirements of this paragraph.

2912 12. Phase I plans must be approved by the district school
2913 board as being in compliance with the building and life safety
2914 codes before June 1 of the year the application is made.

2915 Section 41. For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the sum of \$1
2916 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is
2917 appropriated to the Florida Small Business Development Center
2918 Network under s. 288.001, Florida Statutes, to expand services
2919 in rural communities. The funds shall be allocated to the Office
2920 of Rural Prosperity budget entity within the Department of
2921 Commerce in the Special Categories-SBDCN Rural Services specific
2922 appropriation category.

2923 Section 42. (1) For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the sums of
2924 \$1,827,591 in recurring funds and \$652,327 in nonrecurring funds
2925 are appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Department
2926 of Commerce.

2927 (2) The recurring general revenue funds shall be allocated
2928 to the Office of Rural Prosperity budget entity in the following
2929 specific appropriations categories: \$1,585,823 in Salaries and

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2930 Benefits, \$175,961 in Expenses, \$50,000 in Contracted Services,
2931 \$10,000 in Operating Capital Outlay, and \$5,807 in Transfer to
2932 the Department of Management Services/Statewide Human Resources
2933 Contract.

2934 (3) The nonrecurring general revenue funds shall be
2935 allocated to the Office of Rural Prosperity budget entity in the
2936 following specific appropriations categories: \$92,327 in
2937 Expenses and \$560,000 in Acquisition of Motor Vehicles.

2938 (4) The Department of Commerce is authorized to establish
2939 17.00 full-time equivalent positions with associated salary rate
2940 of 1,060,000 in the Office of Rural Prosperity for the purpose
2941 of implementing this act. The following specific positions,
2942 classifications, and pay plans are authorized: 1.00 Director of
2943 General Operation, Class Code 9327, Pay Grade 940; 15.00
2944 Government Analyst II, Class Code 2225, Pay Grade 026; and 1.00
2945 Administrative Assistant II, Class Code 0712, Pay Grade 018.

2946 Section 43. For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the recurring
2947 sum of \$8 million from the General Revenue Fund is appropriated
2948 to the Office of Rural Prosperity within the Department of
2949 Commerce to implement the Renaissance Grants Program created by
2950 s. 288.014, Florida Statutes. No funds may be used by the state
2951 for administrative costs.

2952 Section 44. For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the recurring
2953 sum of \$500,000 from the Grants and Donations Trust Fund is
2954 appropriated to the Office of Rural Prosperity within the
2955 Department of Commerce to implement the Public Infrastructure
2956 Smart Technology Grant Program created by s. 288.0175, Florida
2957 Statutes.

2958 Section 45. For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the sums of \$4

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2959 million in nonrecurring funds and \$1 million in recurring funds
2960 from the General Revenue Fund are appropriated to the Office of
2961 Rural Prosperity within the Department of Commerce to implement
2962 the Rural Community Development Revolving Loan Fund under s.
2963 288.065, Florida Statutes, as amended by this act.

2964 Section 46. For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the sums of \$40
2965 million in nonrecurring funds and \$5 million in recurring funds
2966 from the General Revenue Fund are appropriated to the Office of
2967 Rural Prosperity within the Department of Commerce to implement
2968 the Rural Infrastructure Fund under s. 288.0655, Florida
2969 Statutes, as amended by this act.

2970 Section 47. For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the sum of
2971 \$250,000 in recurring funds from the Grants and Donations Trust
2972 Fund is appropriated to the Office of Rural Prosperity within
2973 the Department of Commerce to implement s. 288.0657, Florida
2974 Statutes, as amended by this act.

2975 Section 48. For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the sum of \$30
2976 million in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is
2977 appropriated to the Florida Housing Finance Corporation to be
2978 used to preserve affordable multifamily rental housing in rural
2979 communities funded through United States Department of
2980 Agriculture loans. The funds provided in this appropriation
2981 shall be used to issue competitive requests for application for
2982 the rehabilitation or acquisition of such properties to ensure
2983 continued affordability. By October 1, 2026, the Florida Housing
2984 Finance Corporation shall submit a report to the President of
2985 the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives on
2986 projects funded pursuant to this section, which report must
2987 include the number of units preserved and the financing

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2988 portfolio for each project.

2989 Section 49. For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the sum of \$25
2990 million in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is
2991 appropriated to the Department of Health for the purpose of
2992 implementing the Rural Access to Primary and Preventive Care
2993 Grant Program created under s. 381.403, Florida Statutes. Grant
2994 funds shall be awarded over a 5-year period. Notwithstanding s.
2995 216.301, Florida Statutes, and pursuant to s. 216.351, Florida
2996 Statutes, the unexpended balance of funds appropriated pursuant
2997 to this section which is not disbursed by June 30 of the fiscal
2998 year in which funds are appropriated may be carried forward
2999 through the 2033-2034 fiscal year.

3000 Section 50. For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the sum of \$5
3001 million in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is
3002 appropriated to the Department of Health for the purpose of
3003 implementing the Stroke, Cardiac, and Obstetric Response and
3004 Education Grant Program under s. 381.9856, Florida Statutes.
3005 Notwithstanding s. 216.301, Florida Statutes, and pursuant to s.
3006 216.351, Florida Statutes, the unexpended balance of funds
3007 appropriated pursuant to this section which is not disbursed by
3008 June 30 of the fiscal year in which funds are appropriated may
3009 be carried forward through the 2029-2030 fiscal year.

3010 Section 51. For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the sum of \$25
3011 million in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is
3012 appropriated in fixed capital outlay to the Department of Health
3013 for the purpose of implementing the rural hospital capital
3014 improvement grant program under s. 395.6061, Florida Statutes.

3015 Section 52. For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the sums of
3016 \$1,499,261 in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund and

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3017 \$1,933,112 in recurring funds from the Medical Care Trust Fund
3018 are appropriated to the Agency for Health Care Administration to
3019 establish a Diagnosis-Related Grouping (DRG) reimbursement
3020 methodology for critical access hospitals, as defined in s.
3021 408.07, Florida Statutes, for the purpose of providing inpatient
3022 reimbursement to such a hospital in amounts comparable to the
3023 reimbursement the hospital would receive for inpatient services
3024 from the federal Medicare program. The 2025-2026 fiscal year
3025 General Appropriations Act shall establish the DRG reimbursement
3026 methodology for critical access hospital inpatient services as
3027 directed in s. 409.905(5)(c), Florida Statutes.

3028 Section 53. For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the sums of
3029 \$4,840,182 in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund and
3030 \$6,240,820 in recurring funds from the Medical Care Trust Fund
3031 are appropriated to the Agency for Health Care Administration to
3032 establish an Enhanced Ambulatory Patient Grouping (EAPG)
3033 reimbursement methodology for critical access hospitals, as
3034 defined in s. 408.07, Florida Statutes, for the purpose of
3035 providing outpatient reimbursement to such a hospital in amounts
3036 comparable to the reimbursement the hospital would receive for
3037 outpatient services from the federal Medicare program. The 2025-
3038 2026 fiscal year General Appropriations Act shall establish the
3039 EAPG reimbursement methodology for critical access hospital
3040 outpatient services as directed in s. 409.905(6)(b), Florida
3041 Statutes.

3042 Section 54. For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the sum of \$3.6
3043 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is
3044 appropriated to the Department of Education to implement s.
3045 1001.451, Florida Statutes, as amended by this act.

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3046 Section 55. For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the sum of \$25
3047 million in recurring funds is appropriated from the General
3048 Revenue Fund to the Department of Education to be distributed to
3049 regional consortium service organizations under s. 1001.451,
3050 Florida Statutes, in order to provide funds pursuant to s.
3051 1001.4511, Florida Statutes. These funds shall be allocated as
3052 follows: \$5,555,149 to the Heartland Educational Consortium;
3053 \$11,912,923 to the North East Florida Educational Consortium;
3054 and \$7,531,928 to the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium. The
3055 funds must be distributed to each regional consortium service
3056 organization no later than 30 days following the release of the
3057 funds to the department.

3058 Section 56. For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the sum of \$7
3059 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is
3060 appropriated to the Department of Education to implement the
3061 Rural Incentive for Professional Educators (RIPE) Program, s.
3062 1009.635, Florida Statutes, as created by this act.

3063 Section 57. Subsection (3) of section 163.3187, Florida
3064 Statutes, is amended to read:

3065 163.3187 Process for adoption of small scale comprehensive
3066 plan amendment.—

3067 (3) If the small scale development amendment involves a
3068 site within a rural area of opportunity as defined under s.
3069 288.0656 ~~s. 288.0656(2)(d)~~ for the duration of such designation,
3070 the acreage limit listed in subsection (1) shall be increased by
3071 100 percent. The local government approving the small scale plan
3072 amendment shall certify to the state land planning agency that
3073 the plan amendment furthers the economic objectives set forth in
3074 the executive order issued under s. 288.0656(7), and the

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3075 property subject to the plan amendment shall undergo public
3076 review to ensure that all concurrency requirements and federal,
3077 state, and local environmental permit requirements are met.

3078 Section 58. Section 212.205, Florida Statutes, is amended
3079 to read:

3080 212.205 Sales tax distribution reporting.—By March 15 of
3081 each year, each person who received a distribution pursuant to
3082 s. 212.20(6)(d)7.b. and c. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.b. and c.~~ in the
3083 preceding calendar year shall report to the Office of Economic
3084 and Demographic Research the following information:

3085 (1) An itemized accounting of all expenditures of the funds
3086 distributed in the preceding calendar year, including amounts
3087 spent on debt service.

3088 (2) A statement indicating what portion of the distributed
3089 funds have been pledged for debt service.

3090 (3) The original principal amount and current debt service
3091 schedule of any bonds or other borrowing for which the
3092 distributed funds have been pledged for debt service.

3093 Section 59. Section 257.191, Florida Statutes, is amended
3094 to read:

3095 257.191 Construction grants.—The Division of Library and
3096 Information Services may accept and administer library
3097 construction moneys appropriated to it and shall allocate such
3098 appropriation to municipal, county, and regional libraries in
3099 the form of library construction grants on a matching basis. The
3100 local matching portion shall be no less than the grant amount,
3101 on a dollar-for-dollar basis, up to the maximum grant amount,
3102 unless the matching requirement is waived pursuant to s. 288.019
3103 ~~by s. 288.06561~~. Initiation of a library construction project 12

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3104 months or less prior to the grant award under this section does
 3105 ~~shall~~ not affect the eligibility of an applicant to receive a
 3106 library construction grant. The division shall adopt rules for
 3107 the administration of library construction grants. For the
 3108 purposes of this section, s. 257.21 does not apply.

3109 Section 60. Subsection (2) of section 257.193, Florida
 3110 Statutes, is amended to read:

3111 257.193 Community Libraries in Caring Program.—

3112 (2) The purpose of the Community Libraries in Caring
 3113 Program is to assist libraries in rural communities, as defined
 3114 in s. 288.0656(2) and subject to the provisions of s. 288.019 ~~s.~~
 3115 ~~288.06561~~, to strengthen their collections and services, improve
 3116 literacy in their communities, and improve the economic
 3117 viability of their communities.

3118 Section 61. Subsection (17) of section 265.283, Florida
 3119 Statutes, is amended to read:

3120 265.283 Definitions.—The following definitions shall apply
 3121 to ss. 265.281-265.703:

3122 (17) "Underserved arts community assistance program grants"
 3123 means grants used by qualified organizations under the Rural
 3124 Economic Development Initiative, pursuant to s. 288.0656 and
 3125 subject to the provisions of s. 288.019 ~~ss. 288.0656 and~~
 3126 ~~288.06561~~, for the purpose of economic and organizational
 3127 development for underserved cultural organizations.

3128 Section 62. Paragraphs (a) and (d) of subsection (3) of
 3129 section 288.11621, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

3130 288.11621 Spring training baseball franchises.—

3131 (3) USE OF FUNDS.—

3132 (a) A certified applicant may use funds provided under s.

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3133 212.20(6)(d)7.b. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.b.~~ only to:

3134 1. Serve the public purpose of acquiring, constructing,
3135 reconstructing, or renovating a facility for a spring training
3136 franchise.

3137 2. Pay or pledge for the payment of debt service on, or to
3138 fund debt service reserve funds, arbitrage rebate obligations,
3139 or other amounts payable with respect thereto, bonds issued for
3140 the acquisition, construction, reconstruction, or renovation of
3141 such facility, or for the reimbursement of such costs or the
3142 refinancing of bonds issued for such purposes.

3143 3. Assist in the relocation of a spring training franchise
3144 from one unit of local government to another only if the
3145 governing board of the current host local government by a
3146 majority vote agrees to relocation.

3147 (d)1. All certified applicants must place unexpended state
3148 funds received pursuant to s. 212.20(6)(d)7.b. ~~s.~~
3149 ~~212.20(6)(d)6.b.~~ in a trust fund or separate account for use
3150 only as authorized in this section.

3151 2. A certified applicant may request that the Department of
3152 Revenue suspend further distributions of state funds made
3153 available under s. 212.20(6)(d)7.b. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.b.~~ for 12
3154 months after expiration of an existing agreement with a spring
3155 training franchise to provide the certified applicant with an
3156 opportunity to enter into a new agreement with a spring training
3157 franchise, at which time the distributions shall resume.

3158 3. The expenditure of state funds distributed to an
3159 applicant certified before July 1, 2010, must begin within 48
3160 months after the initial receipt of the state funds. In
3161 addition, the construction of, or capital improvements to, a

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3162 spring training facility must be completed within 24 months
3163 after the project's commencement.

3164 Section 63. Paragraph (c) of subsection (2) and paragraphs
3165 (a), (c), and (d) of subsection (3) of section 288.11631,
3166 Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

3167 288.11631 Retention of Major League Baseball spring
3168 training baseball franchises.—

3169 (2) CERTIFICATION PROCESS.—

3170 (c) Each applicant certified on or after July 1, 2013,
3171 shall enter into an agreement with the department which:

3172 1. Specifies the amount of the state incentive funding to
3173 be distributed. The amount of state incentive funding per
3174 certified applicant may not exceed \$20 million. However, if a
3175 certified applicant's facility is used by more than one spring
3176 training franchise, the maximum amount may not exceed \$50
3177 million, and the Department of Revenue shall make distributions
3178 to the applicant pursuant to s. 212.20(6)(d)7.c. ~~s.~~
3179 ~~212.20(6)(d)6.e.~~

3180 2. States the criteria that the certified applicant must
3181 meet in order to remain certified. These criteria must include a
3182 provision stating that the spring training franchise must
3183 reimburse the state for any funds received if the franchise does
3184 not comply with the terms of the contract. If bonds were issued
3185 to construct or renovate a facility for a spring training
3186 franchise, the required reimbursement must be equal to the total
3187 amount of state distributions expected to be paid from the date
3188 the franchise violates the agreement with the applicant through
3189 the final maturity of the bonds.

3190 3. States that the certified applicant is subject to

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3191 decertification if the certified applicant fails to comply with
3192 this section or the agreement.

3193 4. States that the department may recover state incentive
3194 funds if the certified applicant is decertified.

3195 5. Specifies the information that the certified applicant
3196 must report to the department.

3197 6. Includes any provision deemed prudent by the department.

3198 (3) USE OF FUNDS.—

3199 (a) A certified applicant may use funds provided under s.
3200 212.20(6)(d)7.c. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.e.~~ only to:

3201 1. Serve the public purpose of constructing or renovating a
3202 facility for a spring training franchise.

3203 2. Pay or pledge for the payment of debt service on, or to
3204 fund debt service reserve funds, arbitrage rebate obligations,
3205 or other amounts payable with respect thereto, bonds issued for
3206 the construction or renovation of such facility, or for the
3207 reimbursement of such costs or the refinancing of bonds issued
3208 for such purposes.

3209 (c) The Department of Revenue may not distribute funds
3210 under s. 212.20(6)(d)7.c. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.e.~~ until July 1,
3211 2016. Further, the Department of Revenue may not distribute
3212 funds to an applicant certified on or after July 1, 2013, until
3213 it receives notice from the department that:

3214 1. The certified applicant has encumbered funds under
3215 either subparagraph (a)1. or subparagraph (a)2.; and

3216 2. If applicable, any existing agreement with a spring
3217 training franchise for the use of a facility has expired.

3218 (d)1. All certified applicants shall place unexpended state
3219 funds received pursuant to s. 212.20(6)(d)7.c. ~~s.~~

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3220 ~~212.20(6)(d)6.e.~~ in a trust fund or separate account for use
3221 only as authorized in this section.

3222 2. A certified applicant may request that the department
3223 notify the Department of Revenue to suspend further
3224 distributions of state funds made available under s.
3225 212.20(6)(d)7.c. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.e.~~ for 12 months after
3226 expiration of an existing agreement with a spring training
3227 franchise to provide the certified applicant with an opportunity
3228 to enter into a new agreement with a spring training franchise,
3229 at which time the distributions shall resume.

3230 3. The expenditure of state funds distributed to an
3231 applicant certified after July 1, 2013, must begin within 48
3232 months after the initial receipt of the state funds. In
3233 addition, the construction or renovation of a spring training
3234 facility must be completed within 24 months after the project's
3235 commencement.

3236 Section 64. Subsection (1) of section 443.191, Florida
3237 Statutes, is amended to read:

3238 443.191 Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund; establishment
3239 and control.—

3240 (1) There is established, as a separate trust fund apart
3241 from all other public funds of this state, an Unemployment
3242 Compensation Trust Fund, which shall be administered by the
3243 Department of Commerce exclusively for the purposes of this
3244 chapter. The fund must consist of:

3245 (a) All contributions and reimbursements collected under
3246 this chapter;

3247 (b) Interest earned on any moneys in the fund;

3248 (c) Any property or securities acquired through the use of

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3249 moneys belonging to the fund;

3250 (d) All earnings of these properties or securities;

3251 (e) All money credited to this state's account in the
3252 federal Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund under 42 U.S.C. s.
3253 1103;

3254 (f) All money collected for penalties imposed pursuant to
3255 s. 443.151(6) (a);

3256 (g) Advances on the amount in the federal Unemployment
3257 Compensation Trust Fund credited to the state under 42 U.S.C. s.
3258 1321, as requested by the Governor or the Governor's designee;
3259 and

3260 (h) All money deposited in this account as a distribution
3261 pursuant to s. 212.20(6)(d)7.e. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.e.~~

3262

3263 Except as otherwise provided in s. 443.1313(4), all moneys in
3264 the fund must be mingled and undivided.

3265 Section 65. Section 571.26, Florida Statutes, is amended to
3266 read:

3267 571.26 Florida Agricultural Promotional Campaign Trust
3268 Fund.—There is hereby created the Florida Agricultural
3269 Promotional Campaign Trust Fund within the Department of
3270 Agriculture and Consumer Services to receive all moneys related
3271 to the Florida Agricultural Promotional Campaign. Moneys
3272 deposited in the trust fund shall be appropriated for the sole
3273 purpose of implementing the Florida Agricultural Promotional
3274 Campaign, except for money deposited in the trust fund pursuant
3275 to s. 212.20(6)(d)7.h. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.h.~~, which shall be held
3276 separately and used solely for the purposes identified in s.
3277 571.265.

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3278 Section 66. Subsection (2) of section 571.265, Florida
3279 Statutes, is amended to read:

3280 571.265 Promotion of Florida thoroughbred breeding and of
3281 thoroughbred racing at Florida thoroughbred tracks; distribution
3282 of funds.—

3283 (2) Funds deposited into the Florida Agricultural
3284 Promotional Campaign Trust Fund pursuant to s. 212.20(6)(d)7.f.
3285 ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.f.~~ shall be used by the department to encourage
3286 the agricultural activity of breeding thoroughbred racehorses in
3287 this state and to enhance thoroughbred racing conducted at
3288 thoroughbred tracks in this state as provided in this section.
3289 If the funds made available under this section are not fully
3290 used in any one fiscal year, any unused amounts shall be carried
3291 forward in the trust fund into future fiscal years and made
3292 available for distribution as provided in this section.

3293 Section 67. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
3294 made by this act to section 20.60, Florida Statutes, in a
3295 reference thereto, subsection (8) of section 288.9935, Florida
3296 Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3297 288.9935 Microfinance Guarantee Program.—

3298 (8) The department must, in the department's report
3299 required under s. 20.60(10), include an annual report on the
3300 program. The report must, at a minimum, provide:

3301 (a) A comprehensive description of the program, including
3302 an evaluation of its application and guarantee activities,
3303 recommendations for change, and identification of any other
3304 state programs that overlap with the program;

3305 (b) An assessment of the current availability of and access
3306 to credit for entrepreneurs and small businesses in this state;

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3307 (c) A summary of the financial and employment results of
 3308 the entrepreneurs and small businesses receiving loan
 3309 guarantees, including the number of full-time equivalent jobs
 3310 created as a result of the guaranteed loans and the amount of
 3311 wages paid to employees in the newly created jobs;

3312 (d) Industry data about the borrowers, including the six-
 3313 digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)
 3314 code;

3315 (e) The name and location of lenders that receive loan
 3316 guarantees;

3317 (f) The number of loan guarantee applications received;

3318 (g) The number, duration, location, and amount of
 3319 guarantees made;

3320 (h) The number and amount of guaranteed loans outstanding,
 3321 if any;

3322 (i) The number and amount of guaranteed loans with payments
 3323 overdue, if any;

3324 (j) The number and amount of guaranteed loans in default,
 3325 if any;

3326 (k) The repayment history of the guaranteed loans made; and

3327 (l) An evaluation of the program's ability to meet the
 3328 financial performance measures and objectives specified in
 3329 subsection (3).

3330 Section 68. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
 3331 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a
 3332 reference thereto, paragraph (c) of subsection (5) of section
 3333 125.0104, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3334 125.0104 Tourist development tax; procedure for levying;
 3335 authorized uses; referendum; enforcement.-

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3336 (5) AUTHORIZED USES OF REVENUE.—

3337 (c) A county located adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico or the
3338 Atlantic Ocean, except a county that receives revenue from taxes
3339 levied pursuant to s. 125.0108, which meets the following
3340 criteria may use up to 10 percent of the tax revenue received
3341 pursuant to this section to reimburse expenses incurred in
3342 providing public safety services, including emergency medical
3343 services as defined in s. 401.107(3), and law enforcement
3344 services, which are needed to address impacts related to
3345 increased tourism and visitors to an area. However, if taxes
3346 collected pursuant to this section are used to reimburse
3347 emergency medical services or public safety services for tourism
3348 or special events, the governing board of a county or
3349 municipality may not use such taxes to supplant the normal
3350 operating expenses of an emergency medical services department,
3351 a fire department, a sheriff's office, or a police department.
3352 To receive reimbursement, the county must:

3353 1.a. Generate a minimum of \$10 million in annual proceeds
3354 from any tax, or any combination of taxes, authorized to be
3355 levied pursuant to this section;

3356 b. Have at least three municipalities; and

3357 c. Have an estimated population of less than 275,000,
3358 according to the most recent population estimate prepared
3359 pursuant to s. 186.901, excluding the inmate population; or

3360 2. Be a fiscally constrained county as described in s.
3361 218.67(1).

3362

3363 The board of county commissioners must by majority vote approve
3364 reimbursement made pursuant to this paragraph upon receipt of a

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3365 recommendation from the tourist development council.

3366 Section 69. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
3367 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a
3368 reference thereto, subsection (3) of section 193.624, Florida
3369 Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3370 193.624 Assessment of renewable energy source devices.—

3371 (3) This section applies to the installation of a renewable
3372 energy source device installed on or after January 1, 2013, to
3373 new and existing residential real property. This section applies
3374 to a renewable energy source device installed on or after
3375 January 1, 2018, to all other real property, except when
3376 installed as part of a project planned for a location in a
3377 fiscally constrained county, as defined in s. 218.67(1), and for
3378 which an application for a comprehensive plan amendment or
3379 planned unit development zoning has been filed with the county
3380 on or before December 31, 2017.

3381 Section 70. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
3382 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a
3383 reference thereto, subsection (2) of section 196.182, Florida
3384 Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3385 196.182 Exemption of renewable energy source devices.—

3386 (2) The exemption provided in this section does not apply
3387 to a renewable energy source device that is installed as part of
3388 a project planned for a location in a fiscally constrained
3389 county, as defined in s. 218.67(1), and for which an application
3390 for a comprehensive plan amendment or planned unit development
3391 zoning has been filed with the county on or before December 31,
3392 2017.

3393 Section 71. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment

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3394 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a
3395 reference thereto, subsection (1) of section 218.12, Florida
3396 Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3397 218.12 Appropriations to offset reductions in ad valorem
3398 tax revenue in fiscally constrained counties.—

3399 (1) Beginning in fiscal year 2008-2009, the Legislature
3400 shall appropriate moneys to offset the reductions in ad valorem
3401 tax revenue experienced by fiscally constrained counties, as
3402 defined in s. 218.67(1), which occur as a direct result of the
3403 implementation of revisions of Art. VII of the State
3404 Constitution approved in the special election held on January
3405 29, 2008. The moneys appropriated for this purpose shall be
3406 distributed in January of each fiscal year among the fiscally
3407 constrained counties based on each county's proportion of the
3408 total reduction in ad valorem tax revenue resulting from the
3409 implementation of the revision.

3410 Section 72. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
3411 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a
3412 reference thereto, subsection (1) of section 218.125, Florida
3413 Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3414 218.125 Offset for tax loss associated with certain
3415 constitutional amendments affecting fiscally constrained
3416 counties.—

3417 (1) Beginning in the 2010-2011 fiscal year, the Legislature
3418 shall appropriate moneys to offset the reductions in ad valorem
3419 tax revenue experienced by fiscally constrained counties, as
3420 defined in s. 218.67(1), which occur as a direct result of the
3421 implementation of revisions of ss. 3(f) and 4(b), Art. VII of
3422 the State Constitution which were approved in the general

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3423 election held in November 2008. The moneys appropriated for this
3424 purpose shall be distributed in January of each fiscal year
3425 among the fiscally constrained counties based on each county's
3426 proportion of the total reduction in ad valorem tax revenue
3427 resulting from the implementation of the revisions.

3428 Section 73. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
3429 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a
3430 reference thereto, subsection (1) of section 218.135, Florida
3431 Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3432 218.135 Offset for tax loss associated with reductions in
3433 value of certain citrus fruit packing and processing equipment.—

3434 (1) For the 2018-2019 fiscal year, the Legislature shall
3435 appropriate moneys to offset the reductions in ad valorem tax
3436 revenue experienced by fiscally constrained counties, as defined
3437 in s. 218.67(1), which occur as a direct result of the
3438 implementation of s. 193.4516. The moneys appropriated for this
3439 purpose shall be distributed in January 2019 among the fiscally
3440 constrained counties based on each county's proportion of the
3441 total reduction in ad valorem tax revenue resulting from the
3442 implementation of s. 193.4516.

3443 Section 74. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
3444 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a
3445 reference thereto, subsection (1) of section 218.136, Florida
3446 Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3447 218.136 Offset for ad valorem revenue loss affecting
3448 fiscally constrained counties.—

3449 (1) Beginning in fiscal year 2025-2026, the Legislature
3450 shall appropriate moneys to offset the reductions in ad valorem
3451 tax revenue experienced by fiscally constrained counties, as

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3452 defined in s. 218.67(1), which occur as a direct result of the
3453 implementation of revisions of s. 6(a), Art. VII of the State
3454 Constitution approved in the November 2024 general election. The
3455 moneys appropriated for this purpose shall be distributed in
3456 January of each fiscal year among the fiscally constrained
3457 counties based on each county's proportion of the total
3458 reduction in ad valorem tax revenue resulting from the
3459 implementation of the revision of s. 6(a), Art. VII of the State
3460 Constitution.

3461 Section 75. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
3462 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a
3463 reference thereto, paragraph (cc) of subsection (2) of section
3464 252.35, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3465 252.35 Emergency management powers; Division of Emergency
3466 Management.—

3467 (2) The division is responsible for carrying out the
3468 provisions of ss. 252.31-252.90. In performing its duties, the
3469 division shall:

3470 (cc) Prioritize technical assistance and training to
3471 fiscally constrained counties as defined in s. 218.67(1) on
3472 aspects of safety measures, preparedness, prevention, response,
3473 recovery, and mitigation relating to natural disasters and
3474 emergencies.

3475 Section 76. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
3476 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a
3477 reference thereto, subsection (4) of section 288.102, Florida
3478 Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3479 288.102 Supply Chain Innovation Grant Program.—

3480 (4) A minimum of a one-to-one match of nonstate resources,

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3481 including local, federal, or private funds, to the state
3482 contribution is required. An award may not be made for a project
3483 that is receiving or using state funding from another state
3484 source or statutory program, including tax credits. The one-to-
3485 one match requirement is waived for a public entity located in a
3486 fiscally constrained county as defined in s. 218.67(1).

3487 Section 77. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
3488 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a
3489 reference thereto, paragraph (g) of subsection (16) of section
3490 403.064, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3491 403.064 Reuse of reclaimed water.—

3492 (16) By November 1, 2021, domestic wastewater utilities
3493 that dispose of effluent, reclaimed water, or reuse water by
3494 surface water discharge shall submit to the department for
3495 review and approval a plan for eliminating nonbeneficial surface
3496 water discharge by January 1, 2032, subject to the requirements
3497 of this section. The plan must include the average gallons per
3498 day of effluent, reclaimed water, or reuse water that will no
3499 longer be discharged into surface waters and the date of such
3500 elimination, the average gallons per day of surface water
3501 discharge which will continue in accordance with the
3502 alternatives provided for in subparagraphs (a)2. and 3., and the
3503 level of treatment that the effluent, reclaimed water, or reuse
3504 water will receive before being discharged into a surface water
3505 by each alternative.

3506 (g) This subsection does not apply to any of the following:

- 3507 1. A domestic wastewater treatment facility that is located
3508 in a fiscally constrained county as described in s. 218.67(1).
3509 2. A domestic wastewater treatment facility that is located

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3510 in a municipality that is entirely within a rural area of
3511 opportunity as designated pursuant to s. 288.0656.

3512 3. A domestic wastewater treatment facility that is located
3513 in a municipality that has less than \$10 million in total
3514 revenue, as determined by the municipality's most recent annual
3515 financial report submitted to the Department of Financial
3516 Services in accordance with s. 218.32.

3517 4. A domestic wastewater treatment facility that is
3518 operated by an operator of a mobile home park as defined in s.
3519 723.003 and has a permitted capacity of less than 300,000
3520 gallons per day.

3521 Section 78. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
3522 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in
3523 references thereto, subsections (2) and (3) of section 589.08,
3524 Florida Statutes, are reenacted to read:

3525 589.08 Land acquisition restrictions.—

3526 (2) The Florida Forest Service may receive, hold the
3527 custody of, and exercise the control of any lands, and set aside
3528 into a separate, distinct and inviolable fund, any proceeds
3529 derived from the sales of the products of such lands, the use
3530 thereof in any manner, or the sale of such lands save the 25
3531 percent of the proceeds to be paid into the State School Fund as
3532 provided by law. The Florida Forest Service may use and apply
3533 such funds for the acquisition, use, custody, management,
3534 development, or improvement of any lands vested in or subject to
3535 the control of the Florida Forest Service. After full payment
3536 has been made for the purchase of a state forest to the Federal
3537 Government or other grantor, 15 percent of the gross receipts
3538 from a state forest shall be paid to the fiscally constrained

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3539 county or counties, as described in s. 218.67(1), in which it is
3540 located in proportion to the acreage located in each county for
3541 use by the county or counties for school purposes.

3542 (3) The Florida Forest Service shall pay 15 percent of the
3543 gross receipts from the Goethe State Forest to each fiscally
3544 constrained county, as described in s. 218.67(1), in which a
3545 portion of the respective forest is located in proportion to the
3546 forest acreage located in such county. The funds must be equally
3547 divided between the board of county commissioners and the school
3548 board of each fiscally constrained county.

3549 Section 79. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
3550 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a
3551 reference thereto, paragraph (f) of subsection (1) of section
3552 1011.62, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3553 1011.62 Funds for operation of schools.—If the annual
3554 allocation from the Florida Education Finance Program to each
3555 district for operation of schools is not determined in the
3556 annual appropriations act or the substantive bill implementing
3557 the annual appropriations act, it shall be determined as
3558 follows:

3559 (1) COMPUTATION OF THE BASIC AMOUNT TO BE INCLUDED FOR
3560 OPERATION.—The following procedure shall be followed in
3561 determining the annual allocation to each district for
3562 operation:

3563 (f) *Small district factor*.—An additional value per full-
3564 time equivalent student membership is provided to each school
3565 district with a full-time equivalent student membership of fewer
3566 than 20,000 full-time equivalent students which is in a fiscally
3567 constrained county as described in s. 218.67(1). The amount of

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3568 the additional value shall be specified in the General
3569 Appropriations Act.

3570 Section 80. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
3571 made by this act to sections 218.67 and 339.2818, Florida
3572 Statutes, in references thereto, paragraph (c) of subsection (6)
3573 of section 403.0741, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3574 403.0741 Grease waste removal and disposal.—

3575 (6) REGULATION BY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.—

3576 (c) Fiscally constrained counties as described in s.
3577 218.67(1) and small counties as defined in s. 339.2818(2) may
3578 opt out of the requirements of this section.

3579 Section 81. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
3580 made by this act to section 288.0656, Florida Statutes, in a
3581 reference thereto, paragraph (e) of subsection (7) of section
3582 163.3177, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3583 163.3177 Required and optional elements of comprehensive
3584 plan; studies and surveys.—

3585 (7)

3586 (e) This subsection does not confer the status of rural
3587 area of opportunity, or any of the rights or benefits derived
3588 from such status, on any land area not otherwise designated as
3589 such pursuant to s. 288.0656(7).

3590 Section 82. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
3591 made by this act to section 288.9961, Florida Statutes, in a
3592 reference thereto, paragraph (a) of subsection (7) of section
3593 288.9962, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3594 288.9962 Broadband Opportunity Program.—

3595 (7) (a) In evaluating grant applications and awarding
3596 grants, the office must give priority to applications that:

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- 3597 1. Offer broadband Internet service to important community
3598 institutions, including, but not limited to, libraries,
3599 educational institutions, public safety facilities, and health
3600 care facilities;
- 3601 2. Facilitate the use of telemedicine and electronic health
3602 records;
- 3603 3. Serve economically distressed areas of this state, as
3604 measured by indices of unemployment, poverty, or population loss
3605 that are significantly greater than the statewide average;
- 3606 4. Provide for scalability to transmission speeds of at
3607 least 100 megabits per second download and 10 megabits per
3608 second upload;
- 3609 5. Include a component to actively promote the adoption of
3610 the newly available broadband Internet service in the community;
- 3611 6. Provide evidence of strong support for the project from
3612 citizens, government, businesses, and institutions in the
3613 community;
- 3614 7. Provide access to broadband Internet service to the
3615 greatest number of unserved households and businesses;
- 3616 8. Leverage greater amounts of funding for a project from
3617 private sources; or
- 3618 9. Demonstrate consistency with the strategic plan adopted
3619 under s. 288.9961.
- 3620 Section 83. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
3621 made by this act to section 319.32, Florida Statutes, in a
3622 reference thereto, subsection (1) of section 215.211, Florida
3623 Statutes, is reenacted to read:
- 3624 215.211 Service charge; elimination or reduction for
3625 specified proceeds.—

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3626 (1) Notwithstanding the provisions of s. 215.20(1) and
3627 former s. 215.20(3), the service charge provided in s. 215.20(1)
3628 and former s. 215.20(3), which is deducted from the proceeds of
3629 the taxes distributed under ss. 206.606(1), 207.026,
3630 212.0501(6), and 319.32(5), shall be eliminated beginning July
3631 1, 2000.

3632 Section 84. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
3633 made by this act to section 339.68, Florida Statutes, in
3634 references thereto, subsections (5) and (6) of section 339.66,
3635 Florida Statutes, are reenacted to read:

3636 339.66 Upgrade of arterial highways with controlled access
3637 facilities.—

3638 (5) Any existing applicable requirements relating to
3639 department projects shall apply to projects undertaken by the
3640 department pursuant to this section. The department shall take
3641 into consideration the guidance and recommendations of any
3642 previous studies or reports relevant to the projects authorized
3643 by this section and ss. 339.67 and 339.68, including, but not
3644 limited to, the task force reports prepared pursuant to chapter
3645 2019-43, Laws of Florida.

3646 (6) Any existing applicable requirements relating to
3647 turnpike projects apply to projects undertaken by the Turnpike
3648 Enterprise pursuant to this section. The Turnpike Enterprise
3649 shall take into consideration the guidance and recommendations
3650 of any previous studies or reports relevant to the projects
3651 authorized by this section and ss. 339.67 and 339.68, including,
3652 but not limited to, the task force reports prepared pursuant to
3653 chapter 2019-43, Laws of Florida, and with respect to any
3654 extension of the Florida Turnpike from its northerly terminus in

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3655 Wildwood.

3656 Section 85. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
3657 made by this act to section 420.9073, Florida Statutes, in
3658 references thereto, subsections (4) and (6) of section 420.9072,
3659 Florida Statutes, are reenacted to read:

3660 420.9072 State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program.—The
3661 State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program is created for the
3662 purpose of providing funds to counties and eligible
3663 municipalities as an incentive for the creation of local housing
3664 partnerships, to expand production of and preserve affordable
3665 housing, to further the housing element of the local government
3666 comprehensive plan specific to affordable housing, and to
3667 increase housing-related employment.

3668 (4) Moneys in the Local Government Housing Trust Fund shall
3669 be distributed by the corporation to each approved county and
3670 eligible municipality within the county as provided in s.
3671 420.9073. Distributions shall be allocated to the participating
3672 county and to each eligible municipality within the county
3673 according to an interlocal agreement between the county
3674 governing authority and the governing body of the eligible
3675 municipality or, if there is no interlocal agreement, according
3676 to population. The portion for each eligible municipality is
3677 computed by multiplying the total moneys earmarked for a county
3678 by a fraction, the numerator of which is the population of the
3679 eligible municipality and the denominator of which is the total
3680 population of the county. The remaining revenues shall be
3681 distributed to the governing body of the county.

3682 (6) The moneys that otherwise would be distributed pursuant
3683 to s. 420.9073 to a local government that does not meet the

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3684 program's requirements for receipts of such distributions shall
3685 remain in the Local Government Housing Trust Fund to be
3686 administered by the corporation.

3687 Section 86. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
3688 made by this act to section 420.9073, Florida Statutes, in a
3689 reference thereto, paragraph (b) of subsection (7) of section
3690 420.9076, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3691 420.9076 Adoption of affordable housing incentive
3692 strategies; committees.—

3693 (7) The governing board of the county or the eligible
3694 municipality shall notify the corporation by certified mail of
3695 its adoption of an amendment of its local housing assistance
3696 plan to incorporate local housing incentive strategies. The
3697 notice must include a copy of the approved amended plan.

3698 (b) If a county fails to timely adopt an amended local
3699 housing assistance plan to incorporate local housing incentive
3700 strategies but an eligible municipality receiving a local
3701 housing distribution pursuant to an interlocal agreement within
3702 the county does timely adopt an amended local housing assistance
3703 plan to incorporate local housing incentive strategies, the
3704 corporation, after issuance of a notice of termination, shall
3705 thereafter distribute directly to the participating eligible
3706 municipality its share calculated in the manner provided in s.
3707 420.9073.

3708 Section 87. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
3709 made by this act to section 420.9073, Florida Statutes, in a
3710 reference thereto, subsection (2) of section 420.9079, Florida
3711 Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3712 420.9079 Local Government Housing Trust Fund.—

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3713 (2) The corporation shall administer the fund exclusively
3714 for the purpose of implementing the programs described in ss.
3715 420.907-420.9076 and this section. With the exception of
3716 monitoring the activities of counties and eligible
3717 municipalities to determine local compliance with program
3718 requirements, the corporation shall not receive appropriations
3719 from the fund for administrative or personnel costs. For the
3720 purpose of implementing the compliance monitoring provisions of
3721 s. 420.9075(9), the corporation may request a maximum of one-
3722 quarter of 1 percent of the annual appropriation per state
3723 fiscal year. When such funding is appropriated, the corporation
3724 shall deduct the amount appropriated prior to calculating the
3725 local housing distribution pursuant to ss. 420.9072 and
3726 420.9073.

3727 Section 88. This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.

Rural Hospital Capital Improvement Grant Program – Project Summaries and Status

ADVENTHEALTH PALM COAST – Palm Coast

FY 2023-2024

Add a third chiller with supporting equipment. Total cost of the project, \$1,750,000.

FY 2024-2025

This grant is being used to reduce the funding shortfall of the FY 2023-2024 project to add a third chiller.

ADVENTHEALTH WAUCHULA – Wauchula

FY 2023-2024

Purchase a leased building housing a Rural Health Clinic. Purchase has been completed. Total cost of project, \$679,320.

FY 2024-2025

Relocate the PromptCare Clinic by either renovating existing space or purchase an existing clinic building. Total estimated cost is between \$475,000 to \$525,000.

ASCENSION SACRED HEART EMERALD COAST – Destin

FY 2023-2024

Replace fixed nuclear medicine camera equipment; refresh 27 patient rooms and bathrooms; upgrades to HVAC system and HVAC automatic humidification system. Projects completed under budget. Hospital is adding approved FCO projects to use all grant funds.

FY 2024-2025

Refresh 22-bed ICU/PCU rooms; replace flooring in main surgery department; install air compressor in the Sterile Processing department; refresh counters and sinks in Radiology department.

ASCENSION SACRED HEART GULF – Port St. Joe

FY 2023-2024

Harden building exterior; resurface parking lot; update 19 med-surg patient rooms and four ED patient bathrooms. Projects completed under budget. Hospital is adding approved FCO projects to use all grant funds.

FY 2024-2025

Refresh paint in hospital corridor and departments; refresh hospital flooring; replace inpatient beds. Total cost of projects, \$482,293.

Rural Hospital Capital Improvement Grant Program – Project Summaries and Status

BAPTIST MEDICAL CENTER NASSAU – Fernandina Beach

FY 2023-2024

Replace roof top air handler and replace boiler. Boiler replacement has been completed. The roof top handler replacement is expected to be completed by the end of 2024.

FY 2024-2025

Replace roof top air handler #33; exterior wall improvements. Total cost of projects, \$771,550.

CALHOUN-LIBERTY HOSPITAL - Blountstown

FY 2023-2024

Address shortfall of \$1.66 million for phase one construction of replacement hospital facility. The grant funds food service equipment and pre-engineered buildings for the Central Utility Plant.

FY 2024-2025

Purchase new CT Scanner, wall protection and toilet access items for the new facility.

DESOTO MEMORIAL HOSPITAL – Arcadia

FY 2023-2024

Add second chiller and reconfigure layout of chiller system. Recent hurricanes have delayed the evaluation of load monitoring data necessary to reconfigure the system. Total cost of project, \$1,440,000.

FY 2024-2025

Address shortfall in funding for adding second chiller to the hospital.

DOCTORS MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - Bonifay

FY 2023-2024

Replace HVAC system. Hospital is awaiting cooler weather to replace system, as no A/C will be available for the covered area of the hospital during replacement. Total cost, \$1.6 million.

FY 2024-2025

Various equipment replacement; purchase warehouse/storage building.

Rural Hospital Capital Improvement Grant Program – Project Summaries and Status

DOCTORS' MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - Perry

FY 2023-2024

Renovate emergency room space. Project completed. Total cost of project, \$967,099.

FY 2024-2025

Upgrade cafeteria; renovate cardio/pulmonary rehab room; construct outdoor rehab trail and cover/renovate patio for rehab patients. Total cost, \$512,000.

ED FRASER MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - Macclenny

FY 2023-2024

Renovate emergency department space. Due to errors in permit applications by the contractor and architect, hospital has assumed all responsibilities. Project is proceeding. Total estimated cost, \$2.2 million.

FY 2024-2025

Address funding shortfall of FY 2023-2024 ED renovation project.

GEORGE E WEEMS MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - Apalachicola

FY 2023-2024

Replace exterior doors; upgrade phone system; replace CT equipment. Phone system project completed, and work is ongoing to replace doors. CT equipment is pending purchase.

FY 2024-2025

CT room creation/renovation; replace security system; IT switch replacement; patient rooms flooring replacement.

HCA FLORIDA PUTNAM HOSPITAL - Palatka

FY 2023-2024

Interior modernizations in Med-Surg and Step-Down units. This project has required a lengthy lead time for planning. Construction has begun with completion by 3/31/2025. Grant funds are expected to be expended by the end of 2024. Total cost of project, \$887,250.

FY 2024-2025

Add medical air and suction to 20 medical-surgical rooms, and repair water intrusion damage. Total cost, \$650,000.

Rural Hospital Capital Improvement Grant Program – Project Summaries and Status

HCA FLORIDA RAULERSON HOSPITAL - Okeechobee

FY 2023-2024

Upgrade HVAC. Project has had a long design phase. Project to be completed by 6/30/2025, with grants funds to be expended by the end of 2024. Total project cost, \$1,896,384.

FY 2024-2025

Continuation of the project to upgrade current HVAC system.

HENDRY REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER - Clewiston

FY 2023-2024

Partial roof replacement and office building roof replacement; replace chiller and cooling tower, install storm shutters. Roof replacement and storm shutter projects have been completed. The Chiller project is expected to be completed by mid-November, 2024. Total cost, \$825,407.

FY 2024-2025

Replace main a/c cooling tower; parking lot improvements; install water filtration and conditioning system for HVAC; renovate kitchen/bathrooms in housing unit; install emergency power generator. Total cost, \$595,864.

JACKSON HOSPITAL - Marianna

FY 2023-2024

Renovate a building to house the hospital IT Department. Construction has begun, with completion by the end of 2024. Total cost to exceed \$575,000.

FY 2024-2025

Buildout of the new building space to house the physical therapy department. Total cost \$3.5 million (\$1.4 million being funded by an unrelated grant.)

JAY HOSPITAL - Jay

FY 2023-2024

Purchase 64 slice CT, with installation; update space for Inpatient Rehab; update x-ray file room. All projects have been completed.

FY 2024-2025

Replace gastroenterology system; replace front entry canopy; upgrade areas of hospital; renovate 19 patient rooms and bathrooms. Total cost, \$816,937.

Rural Hospital Capital Improvement Grant Program – Project Summaries and Status

LAKE BUTLER HOSPITAL – Lake Butler

FY 2023-2024

Purchase and install powerhouse; upgrade sprinkler system; mechanical installation for HVAC and chiller. Grant funds expended. Total costs, \$1,705,738.

FY 2024-2025

Continuation of 2023-24 ED renovation project to upgrade hospital sprinkler system, upgrade power capacity to hospital; purchase larger emergency power generator.

LAKESIDE MEDICAL CENTER – Belle Glade

FY 2024-2025

Replace Nuclear Medicine camera; add telemetry equipment; renovate Nuclear Medicine room. Total costs \$530,000.

MADISON COUNTY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - Madison

FY 2023-2024

Renovate a building on campus for use as a clinic; upgrade facility security system. Security system project completed. Renovation construction to begin in October, 2024. Total costs, \$762,223.

FY 2024-2025

Replace lab, mammography and laser therapy equipment; purchase additional security cameras. Total costs, \$847,422.

MARINERS HOSPITAL - Tavernier

FY 2024-2025

Renovation and relocation of the Endoscopy Suite. Total costs, \$1.7 million.

NORTHWEST FLORIDA COMMUNITY HOSPITAL - Chipley

FY 2023-2024

Address funding shortfall to renovate patient rooms and expand operating room. All grant funds expended. Total costs, \$7.6 million.

FY 2024-2025

Continuation of operating room expansion project; remodel 10 med-surg patient rooms; renovate ED, replace main floor flooring; replace chiller. Additional projects costs, \$935,297.

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Community Affairs

BILL: SB 68

INTRODUCER: Senator Martin

SUBJECT: Health Facilities Authorities

DATE: February 27, 2025 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Shuler	Fleming	CA	Pre-meeting
2.			HP	
3.			RC	

I. Summary:

SB 68 substantially amends multiple provisions of Part III of ch. 154, F.S., related to health facilities authorities (authorities). The bill expands the definition of “health facility” to include other entities and associations organized not for profit, including, but not limited to, limited liability companies controlled directly or indirectly by one or more not-for-profit organizations. The bill expands the powers of authorities related to loans, bonds, and other debts used for the purpose of acquiring, constructing, financing, and refinancing projects and specifies requirements for agreements executed for such financing tools.

The bill has an effective date of July 1, 2025.

II. Present Situation:

Health Facilities Authorities

Generally

The Health Facilities Authorities Law¹ (the Law) was enacted in 1974 to provide health facilities in each local agency (defined as a county or municipality²) with a measure of assistance and an alternate method to enable the health facilities to provide the facilities and structures that are determined to be needed by the community to improve the development and maintenance of the public health.³

¹ Part III of ch. 154, F.S.

² Section 154.205(9), F.S.

³ Section 154.203, F.S.

Health facilities include any private corporation organized not-for-profit and authorized by law to provide:

- Hospital services in accordance with ch. 395, F.S., related to hospital licensing and regulation;
- Nursing home care services in accordance with ch. 400, F.S., related to nursing home and related health care facilities;
- Life care services in accordance with ch. 651, F.S., related to continuing care contracts;
- Services for the developmentally disabled under ch. 393, F.S., related to developmental disabilities;
- Services for the mentally ill under ch. 394, F.S., related to mental health;
- Assisted living services in accordance with ch. 429, related to assisted care communities;
- Hospice services in accordance with ch. 400, related to nursing homes and related health care facilities; and
- Independent living facilities and services as part of a retirement community that provides nursing home care services or assisted living services on the same campus.⁴

The Law authorizes a local agency to create an authority if the governing body⁵ of the local agency determines there is a need for an authority by adopting an ordinance or resolution.⁶ An authority is a public corporation created by s. 154.207, F.S.; or a board, body, commission, or department of a local agency succeeding to the principal functions of the public corporation or to whom the powers and responsibilities authorized by the Law are given by the local agency.⁷ The governing body of the local agency is required to appoint five persons, who must be residents of the local agency, as members of the authority to serve staggered terms of 4 years each.⁸ Members of the authority are eligible for reappointment and serve without compensation, but are paid for necessary expenses incurred while engaged in the performance of the authority's duties.⁹ Costs of employing professionals, staff, and other costs of operating the authority must be paid from funds obtained under the Law.¹⁰

Any member of the authority who is employed by, or receives income from, a health facility under consideration by the authority may not vote on any matter related to that facility.¹¹ All meetings of the authority, and its records, books, documents, and papers are open and available to the public in accordance with the Public Meetings Law in s. 286.011, F.S.¹²

Purpose and Powers of the Authority

The purpose of the authority is to assist health facilities in the acquisition, construction, financing, and refinancing of projects within the geographical limits of the local agency.¹³

⁴ Section 154.205(8), F.S.

⁵ The governing body means the board, commission, or other governing body of any local agency in which the general legislative powers of such local agency are vested. Section 154.205(7), F.S.

⁶ Section 154.207(1), F.S.

⁷ Section 154.205(2), F.S.

⁸ Section 154.207(4), F.S.

⁹ Section 154.207(8), F.S.

¹⁰ See s. 154.211, F.S.

¹¹ Section 154.207(9), F.S.

¹² Section 154.207(7), F.S.

¹³ Section 154.209, F.S.

However, if an authority finds that there will be a benefit or a cost savings to a health facility located within its jurisdiction, it may issue bonds for the health facility to finance projects for the health facility or for another not-for-profit corporation under common control with a health facility that is located outside the geographical limits of the local agency or outside the state.¹⁴

A “project” is defined¹⁵ as any structure, facility, machinery, equipment, or other property suitable for use by a health facility in connection with its operations or proposed operations, including without limitation:

- Real property;
- A clinic, computer facility, dining hall, firefighting facility, fire prevention facility, food service and preparation facility, health care facility, long-term care facility, hospital, interns’ residence, laboratory, laundry, maintenance facility, nurses’ residence; nursing home, nursing school, office, parking area, pharmacy, recreational facility, research facility, storage facility, utility, or X-ray facility, or any combination of these; and
- Other structures or facilities related, required, or useful for health care purposes, research, or the operation of a health facility, including facilities or structures essential or convenient for the orderly conduct of the health facility and other similar items necessary or convenient for the operation of a particular facility or structure in the manner for which its use is intended; and excluding fuel, supplies, or other items customarily charged as current operating expenses.

The Law also provides in s. 154.209(18), F.S., that an accounts receivable program constitutes a project.

The authority is authorized and empowered, among other things, to:

- Sue and be sued;
- Purchase, lease, receive by gift or otherwise, or obtain options for the acquisition of, any real or personal property for the acquisition, construction, operation, or maintenance of any project;
- Construct, acquire, own, lease, repair, maintain, extend, expand, improve, rehabilitate, renovate, furnish, and equip projects and to pay all or any part of these costs from the proceeds of bonds of the authority or from any other funds made available to the authority for such purpose;
- Make and execute agreements of lease, contracts, deeds, mortgages, notes, and other instruments necessary or convenient in the exercise of its powers and functions;
- Sell, lease, exchange, mortgage, transfer, or otherwise dispose of, or to grant options for any such purposes with respect to any project, any real or personal property or interest therein;
- Pledge or assign any money, rents, charges, fees, or other revenues and any proceeds derived from sales of property, insurance, or condemnation awards;
- Fix, charge, and collect rents, fees, and charges for the use of any project;
- Issue bonds for the purpose of providing funds to pay all or any part of the cost of any project and to issue refunding bonds;

¹⁴ Section 154.247, F.S.

¹⁵ Section 154.205(10), F.S.

- Employ consulting engineers, architects, surveyors, attorneys, accountants, financial experts, and such other employees and agents as may be necessary and to fix their compensation;
- Acquire existing projects, reimburse any health facility for the cost of such project, and refund outstanding obligations, mortgages, or advances issued, made, or given by a health facility for the cost of the project;
- Mortgage any project and site for the benefit of the holders of the bonds issued to finance that project;
- Participate in and to issue bonds for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a self-insurance pool, as provided under the state Insurance Code, on behalf of a health facility or a group of health facilities in order to resolve issues related to an act or omission of the health facility, its employees, or agents in the performance of health care or health-care-related functions;
- Issue special obligation revenue bonds for the purpose of establishing and maintaining the self-insurance pool and related reserve funds;
- Participate in and issue bonds and other forms of indebtedness for the purpose of establishing and maintaining an accounts receivable program on behalf of a health facility or group of health facilities;
- Issue and renew its negotiable notes; and
- Issue revenue bonds for the purpose of paying all or any part of the cost of any project or for acquiring existing or completed health facilities projects and negotiable bond anticipation notes payable out of revenues derived by the authority from the sale, operation, or leasing of any project.¹⁶

Revenue bonds issued by an authority under the Law are not a debt, liability, obligation, or a pledge of the faith and credit of the local agency, the state, or any political subdivision but are payable solely from the revenues of the project.¹⁷

The Law provides that if a project is subject to review under the Health Facility and Services Development Act in ss. 408.031 – 408.045, F.S., a certificate of need (CON) is required before revenue bonds are validated for a project.¹⁸ A CON is a written statement issued by the Agency for Health Care Administration (Agency) evidencing community need for a new, converted, expanded, or otherwise significantly modified health care facility or hospice.¹⁹ Currently, a CON is required for the addition of beds in community nursing homes or intermediate care facilities for the developmentally disabled, the new construction or establishment of additional health care facilities²⁰ the conversion from one type of health care facility to another, and the establishment of a hospice, certain hospice inpatient facilities.²¹ A CON issued by the Agency is not required for certain projects upon request.²²

¹⁶ See ss. 154.209, 154.217, and 154.219, F.S.

¹⁷ Section 154.223, F.S.

¹⁸ Section 154.245, F.S. See also s. 154.213, F.S.

¹⁹ Section 408.032(3), F.S.

²⁰ Except for a replacement health care facility when the proposed project site is located on the same site as or within 1 mile of the existing health care facility if the number of beds in each licensed bed category will not increase. Section 408.036(1)(b), F.S.

²¹ Section 408.036(1), F.S.

²² See s.408.036(3), F.S.

Currently there are 22 Health Facilities Authorities throughout the state.²³

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

SB 68 revises the definition of a health facility to include other entities and associations organized not for profit, including, but not limited to, limited liability companies controlled directly or indirectly by one or more not-for-profit organizations.

The bill revises the powers of authorities to include the power to make and execute loan agreements; to refund outstanding bonds; to refund certain debts issued, made, or given on behalf of a health facility; to make mortgage or other secured or unsecured loans to or for the benefit of any health facility for the cost of a project or to refund or refinance outstanding bonds, obligations, loans, indebtedness, or advances.

The bill requires that mortgage or other secured or unsecured loans be made pursuant to an agreement between an authority and a health facility and allows such loans to be made to an entity affiliated with a health facility that undertakes such financing, refunding, or refinancing, if the loan proceeds are made available to or applied for the benefit of the health facility.

The bill applies the existing requirements for lease agreements in current law to loan agreements and specifies additional requirements for loan agreements. Specifically, the bill requires that a loan agreement govern projects financed or refinanced by the authority with the proceeds of bonds. Such a loan agreement may be between an authority and a health facility or between an authority and an entity affiliated with a health facility that undertakes such financing if the loan proceeds are made available to or applied for the benefit of the health facility.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2025.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

²³ FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, Official List of Special Districts, <https://www.floridajobs.org/community-planning-and-development/special-districts/special-district-accountability-program/official-list-of-special-districts>, (last visited on Feb 26, 2025). They include the Alachua County Health Facilities Authority, Altamonte Springs Health Facilities Authority, Brevard County Health Facilities Authority, City of Cape Coral Health Facilities Authority, City of Miami Health Facilities Authority, City of South Miami Health Facilities Authority, City of St. Petersburg Health Facilities Authority, Collier County Health Facilities Authority, Escambia Health Facilities Authority, Highlands County Health Facilities Authority, Jacksonville Health Facilities Authority, Martin County Health Facilities Authority, Miami Beach Health Facilities Authority, Miami-Dade County Health Facilities Authority, Mount Dora Health Facilities Authority, Orange County Health Facilities Authority, Osceola County Health Facilities Authority, Palm Beach County Health Facilities Authority, Pasco County Health Facilities Authority, Pinellas County Health Facilities Authority, Santa Rosa County Health Facilities Authority, and Sarasota County Health Facilities Authority. *Id.*

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

Article VII, s. 19 of the Florida Constitution requires that legislation that increases or creates taxes or fees be passed by a 2/3 vote of each chamber in a bill with no other subject. The bill does not increase or create new taxes or fees. Thus, the constitutional requirements related to new or increased taxes or fees do not apply.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

The bill expands the available options for authorities to assist private entities in acquiring, constructing, financing, and refinancing projects supporting the provision of health care services.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 154.205, 154.209, 154.213, 154.219, 154.221, 154.225, 154.235, and 154.247.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

By Senator Martin

33-00198-25

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1 A bill to be entitled
 2 An act relating to health facilities authorities;
 3 amending s. 154.205, F.S.; revising the definition of
 4 the term "health facility" to include other entities
 5 and associations organized not for profit; amending s.
 6 154.209, F.S.; revising the powers of health
 7 facilities authorities to include the power to issue
 8 certain loans and execute related loan agreements;
 9 amending s. 154.213, F.S.; specifying requirements for
 10 projects financed by loan agreements issued by a
 11 health facilities authority; specifying provisions
 12 that may be included in such loan agreements; amending
 13 ss. 154.219, 154.221, 154.225, 154.235, and 154.247,
 14 F.S.; conforming provisions to changes made by the
 15 act; providing an effective date.

16
 17 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

18
 19 Section 1. Subsection (8) of section 154.205, Florida
 20 Statutes, is amended to read:

21 154.205 Definitions.—The following terms, whenever used in
 22 this part, shall have the following meanings unless a different
 23 meaning clearly appears from the context:

24 (8) "Health facility" means any private corporation or
 25 other entity or association organized not for profit, including,
 26 but not limited to, a limited liability company controlled
 27 directly or indirectly by one or more not-for-profit
 28 organizations, and authorized by law to provide:

29 (a) Hospital services in accordance with chapter 395;

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- 30 (b) Nursing home care services in accordance with chapter
31 400;
- 32 (c) Life care services in accordance with chapter 651;
- 33 (d) Services for the developmentally disabled under chapter
34 393;
- 35 (e) Services for the mentally ill under chapter 394;
- 36 (f) Assisted living services in accordance with chapter
37 429; or
- 38 (g) Hospice services in accordance with chapter 400.

39

40 The term also includes any private corporation or other entity
41 or association organized not for profit which offers independent
42 living facilities and services as part of a retirement community
43 that provides nursing home care services or assisted living
44 services on the same campus.

45 Section 2. Present subsection (19) of section 154.209,
46 Florida Statutes, is redesignated as subsection (21), a new
47 subsection (19) and subsection (20) are added to that section,
48 and subsections (6), (8), (9), (13), and (18) of that section
49 are amended, to read:

50 154.209 Powers of authority.—The purpose of the authority
51 shall be to assist health facilities in the acquisition,
52 construction, financing, and refinancing of projects in any
53 incorporated or unincorporated area within the geographical
54 limits of the local agency. For this purpose, the authority is
55 authorized and empowered:

- 56 (6) To make and execute agreements of lease, contracts,
57 deeds, loan agreements, mortgages, notes, and other instruments
58 necessary or convenient in the exercise of its powers and

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59 functions under this part.

60 (8) To pledge or assign any money, rents, loan payments,
61 charges, fees, or other revenues and any proceeds derived from
62 sales of property, insurance, or condemnation awards.

63 (9) To fix, charge, and collect rents, loan payments, fees,
64 and charges for the use of any project.

65 (13) To acquire existing projects and to refund outstanding
66 bonds, obligations, mortgages, or advances issued, made, or
67 given by or on behalf of a health facility for the cost of such
68 project.

69 (18) To participate in and issue bonds and other forms of
70 indebtedness for the purpose of establishing and maintaining an
71 accounts receivable program on behalf of a health facility or
72 group of health facilities. Notwithstanding any other provisions
73 of this part, the structuring and financing of an accounts
74 receivable program pursuant to this subsection shall constitute
75 a project and may be structured for the benefit of health
76 facilities within or outside the geographical limits of the
77 local agency. An accounts receivable program may include the
78 financing of accounts receivable acquired by a health facility
79 from other not-for-profit health care organizations
80 ~~corporations,~~ whether or not controlled by or affiliated with
81 the health facility and regardless of location within or outside
82 the geographical limits of this state.

83 (19) To make mortgage or other secured or unsecured loans
84 to or for the benefit of any health facility for the cost of a
85 project in accordance with an agreement between the authority
86 and the health facility. Such loans may be made to any entity
87 affiliated with a health facility that undertakes such

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88 financing, if the proceeds of such loan are made available to or
89 applied for the benefit of such health facility.

90 (20) To make mortgage or other secured or unsecured loans
91 to or for the benefit of a health facility in accordance with an
92 agreement between the authority and the health facility to
93 refund or refinance outstanding bonds, obligations, loans,
94 indebtedness, or advances issued, made, given, or incurred by or
95 for the benefit of such health facility for the cost of a
96 project. Such loans may be made to any entity affiliated with a
97 health facility that undertakes such refunding or refinancing,
98 if the proceeds of such loan are made available to or applied
99 for the benefit of such health facility.

100 Section 3. Section 154.213, Florida Statutes, is amended to
101 read:

102 154.213 Agreements of lease; loan agreements.—In
103 undertaking any project pursuant to this part, the authority
104 shall first obtain a valid certificate of need evidencing need
105 for the project and a statement that the project serves a public
106 purpose by advancing the commerce, welfare, and prosperity of
107 the local agency and its people. A ~~No~~ project financed under ~~the~~
108 ~~provisions of this part~~ may not shall be operated by the
109 authority or any other governmental agency; however, the
110 authority may temporarily operate or cause to be operated all or
111 any part of a project to protect its interest therein pending
112 any leasing of such project in accordance with ~~the provisions of~~
113 this part. The authority may lease a project or projects to a
114 health facility for operation and maintenance in such manner as
115 to effectuate the purposes of this part under an agreement of
116 lease in form and substance not inconsistent herewith. Projects

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117 financed or refinanced by the authority with the proceeds of
118 bonds issued for the benefit of a health facility pursuant to s.
119 154.209(19) or (20) shall be governed by one or more loan
120 agreements made between the authority and a health facility, or
121 between the authority and an entity affiliated with a health
122 facility that undertakes such financing, if the proceeds of such
123 loan are made available to or applied for the benefit of such
124 health facility.

125 (1) Any such agreement of lease or loan agreement may
126 provide, among other provisions, that:

127 (a) The lessee under an agreement of lease or an obligor
128 under a loan agreement shall at its own expense operate, repair,
129 and maintain the project or projects financed or refinanced
130 ~~leased~~ thereunder.

131 (b) The rent payable under the agreement of lease or the
132 loan payments made pursuant to the loan agreement shall in the
133 aggregate be not less than an amount sufficient to pay all of
134 the interest, principal, and redemption premiums, if any, on the
135 bonds that are ~~shall be~~ issued by the authority to pay the cost
136 of the project or projects financed or refinanced ~~leased~~
137 thereunder.

138 (c) The lessee under an agreement of lease or the obligor
139 under a loan agreement shall pay all costs incurred by the
140 authority in connection with the acquisition, financing,
141 construction, and administration of the project or projects
142 financed or refinanced ~~leased~~, except as may be paid out of the
143 proceeds of bonds or otherwise, including, but not ~~without being~~
144 limited to, ÷ insurance costs, the cost of administering the bond
145 resolution authorizing such bonds and any trust agreement

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146 securing the bonds, and the fees and expenses of trustees,
147 paying agents, attorneys, consultants, and others.

148 (d) The terms of the agreement of lease or loan agreement
149 shall terminate not earlier than the date on which all such
150 bonds and all other obligations incurred by the authority in
151 connection with the project or projects financed or refinanced
152 ~~leased thereunder are~~ shall be paid in full, including interest,
153 principal, and redemption premiums, if any, or adequate funds
154 for such payment are ~~shall be~~ deposited in trust.

155 (e) The lessee's obligation to pay rent under the agreement
156 of lease and the obligor's obligation to make loan payments
157 under a loan agreement may ~~shall~~ not be subject to cancellation,
158 termination, or abatement by the lessee or the obligor until
159 such payment of the bonds or provision for such payment is ~~shall~~
160 be made.

161 (2) Such agreement of lease or loan agreement may contain
162 such additional provisions as in the determination of the
163 authority are necessary or convenient to effectuate the purposes
164 of this part, including provisions for extensions of the term
165 and renewals of the lease or loan agreement and vesting in the
166 lessee an option to purchase the project leased thereunder
167 pursuant to such terms and conditions consistent with this part
168 as shall be prescribed in the lease. Except as may otherwise be
169 expressly stated in the agreement of lease or loan agreement, to
170 provide for any contingencies involving the damaging,
171 destruction, or condemnation of the project financed or
172 refinanced ~~leased~~ or any substantial portion thereof, such
173 option to purchase may not be exercised unless all bonds issued
174 for such project, including all principal, interest, and

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175 redemption premiums, if any, and all other obligations incurred
176 by the authority in connection with such project, shall have
177 been paid in full or sufficient funds shall have been deposited
178 in trust for such payment. The purchase price of such project
179 shall not be less than an amount sufficient to pay in full all
180 of the bonds, including all principal, interest, and redemption
181 premiums, if any, issued for the project then outstanding and
182 all other obligations incurred by the authority in connection
183 with such project.

184 Section 4. Paragraph (b) of subsection (4) of section
185 154.219, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

186 154.219 Revenue bonds.—

187 (4) Any resolution or resolutions authorizing any revenue
188 bonds or any issue of revenue bonds may contain provisions which
189 shall be a part of the contract with the holders of the revenue
190 bonds to be authorized, as to:

191 (b) The rentals, loan payments, fees, and other charges to
192 be charged, the amounts to be raised in each year thereby, and
193 the use and disposition of the revenues.

194 Section 5. Section 154.221, Florida Statutes, is amended to
195 read:

196 154.221 Security of bondholders.—In the discretion of the
197 authority, any bonds issued under ~~the provisions of~~ this part
198 may be secured by a trust agreement by and between the authority
199 and a corporate trustee, which may be any trust company or bank
200 having the powers of a trust company within or outside ~~without~~
201 the state. Such trust agreement or resolution providing for the
202 issuance of such bonds may pledge or assign the fees, rents,
203 charges, or proceeds from the sale of any project or part

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204 thereof, insurance proceeds, condemnation awards, and other
205 funds and revenues to be received therefor, and may provide for
206 the mortgaging of any project or any part thereof as security
207 for repayment of the bonds. Such trust agreement or resolution
208 providing for the issuance of such bonds shall contain such
209 provisions for protecting and enforcing the rights and remedies
210 of the bondholders as may be reasonable and proper and not in
211 violation of law, including covenants setting forth the duties
212 of the authority in relation to the acquisition of property and
213 the construction, improvement, maintenance, repair, operation,
214 and insurance of the project or projects in connection with
215 which such bonds shall have been authorized; the fees, rents,
216 loan payments, and other charges to be fixed and collected; the
217 sale of any project, or part thereof, or other property; the
218 terms and conditions for the issuance of additional bonds; and
219 the custody, safeguarding, and application of all moneys. It
220 shall be lawful for any bank or trust company incorporated under
221 the laws of the state which may act as depositary of the
222 proceeds of bonds, revenues, or other money hereunder to furnish
223 such indemnifying bonds or to pledge such securities as may be
224 required by the authority. Any such trust agreement or
225 resolution shall set forth the rights and remedies of the
226 bondholders and of the trustee and may restrict the individual
227 right of action by bondholders. In addition to the foregoing,
228 any such trust agreement or resolution may contain such other
229 provisions as the authority may deem reasonable and proper for
230 the security of the bondholders. All expenses incurred in
231 carrying out the provisions of such trust agreement or
232 resolution may be treated as a part of the cost of the project

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233 or projects in connection with which bonds are issued or as an
234 expense of administration of such projects, as the case may be.

235 Section 6. Section 154.225, Florida Statutes, is amended to
236 read:

237 154.225 Revenues.—

238 (1) The authority is hereby authorized to fix and to
239 collect fees, rents, loan payments, and charges for the use of
240 any project or projects and any part or section thereof. The
241 authority may require that the health facility operating any
242 project or any part thereof financed or refinanced under this
243 chapter or the lessee of any project or part thereof shall
244 operate, repair, and maintain the project and bear the cost
245 thereof and other costs of the authority in connection with the
246 project or projects financed or refinanced ~~leased~~ as may be
247 provided in the agreement of lease, loan agreement, or other
248 contract with the authority, in addition to other obligations
249 imposed under such agreement or contract.

250 (2) The fees, rents, loan payments, and charges shall be so
251 fixed as to provide a fund sufficient to pay the principal of,
252 and the interest on, such bonds as the same shall become due and
253 payable and to create reserves, if any, deemed by the authority
254 to be necessary for such purposes. The fees, rents, loan
255 payments, charges, and all other revenues and proceeds derived
256 from the project or projects in connection with which the bonds
257 of any issue shall have been issued, except such part thereof as
258 may be necessary for such reserves or any expenditures as may be
259 provided in the resolution authorizing the issuance of such
260 bonds or in the trust agreement securing the same, shall be set
261 aside at such regular intervals as may be specified in such

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262 resolution or such trust agreement in a sinking fund which is
263 hereby pledged to, and charged with, the payment of the
264 principal of and the interest on such bonds as the same shall
265 become due and the redemption price or the purchase price of
266 bonds retired by call or purchase as therein provided. Such
267 pledge shall be valid and binding from the time when the pledge
268 is made. The fees, rents, loan payments, charges, and other
269 revenues and moneys so pledged and thereafter received by the
270 authority shall immediately be subject to the lien of such
271 pledge without any physical delivery thereof or further act, and
272 the lien of any such pledge shall be valid and binding as
273 against all parties having claims of any kind in tort, contract,
274 or otherwise against the authority, irrespective of whether such
275 parties have notice thereof. The use and disposition of money to
276 the credit of such sinking fund shall be subject to the
277 provisions of the resolution authorizing the issuance of such
278 bonds or of such trust agreement. Except as may otherwise be
279 provided in the resolution or the trust agreement, the sinking
280 fund shall be a fund for all such bonds without distinction or
281 priority of one over another.

282 Section 7. Subsection (1) of section 154.235, Florida
283 Statutes, is amended to read:

284 154.235 Refunding bonds.—

285 (1) The authority is hereby authorized to provide for the
286 issuance of revenue bonds for the purpose of refunding:

287 (a) Any of its revenue bonds then outstanding; and

288 (b) Revenue bonds of other issuers, the proceeds of which
289 were used to finance or refinance projects of one or more health
290 facilities.

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291
292 Such refunds may include,~~including~~ the payment of any
293 redemption premium thereon and any interest accrued or to accrue
294 to the earliest or subsequent date of redemption, purchase, or
295 maturity of such revenue bonds.

296 Section 8. Section 154.247, Florida Statutes, is amended to
297 read:

298 154.247 Financing of projects located outside of local
299 agency.~~Notwithstanding any provision of this part to the~~
300 ~~contrary,~~ an authority may, if it finds that there will be a
301 benefit or a cost savings to a health facility located within
302 its jurisdiction, issue bonds for such health facility to
303 finance projects for such health facility, or for another
304 private corporation or other entity or association organized
305 not-for-profit corporation~~corporation~~ under common control with such health
306 facility, located outside the geographical limits of the local
307 agency or outside this state.

308 Section 9. This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.



THE FLORIDA SENATE

Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100

COMMITTEES:

Criminal Justice, *Chair*
Appropriations Committee on Criminal and Civil
Justice, *Chair*
Appropriations
Appropriations Committee on Transportation,
Tourism, and Economic Development
Banking and Insurance
Rules
Transportation

SENATOR JONATHAN MARTIN

33rd District

February 4, 2025

Chair Stan McClain
Committee on Community Affairs
315 Knott Building
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

RE: SB 68: Health Facilities Authorities

Dear Chair McClain:

Please allow this letter to serve as my respectful request to place SB 68, relating to Health Facilities Authorities, on the next committee agenda.

Your kind consideration of this request is greatly appreciated. Please feel free to contact my office for any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon Martin".

Jonathan Martin
Senate District 33

REPLY TO:

- 2000 Main Street, Suite 401, Fort Myers, Florida 33901 (239) 338-2570
- 311 Senate Building, 404 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100 (850) 487-5033

Senate's Website: www.flsenate.gov

BEN ALBRITTON
President of the Senate

JASON BRODEUR
President Pro Tempore

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Community Affairs

BILL: SB 218

INTRODUCER: Senator Arrington

SUBJECT: Tax Exemption for Disabled Ex-servicemembers

DATE: February 26, 2025

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Shuler	Fleming	CA	Pre-meeting
2.			FT	
3.			AP	

I. Summary:

SB 218 increases the value of the ad valorem tax exemption for disabled ex-servicemembers from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2025.

II. Present Situation:

General Overview of Property Taxation

The ad valorem tax or “property tax” is an annual tax levied by counties, municipalities, school districts, and some special districts. The tax is based on the taxable value of property as of January 1 of each year.¹ The property appraiser annually determines the “just value”² of property within the taxing authority and then applies relevant exclusions, assessment limitations, and exemptions to determine the property’s “taxable value.”³ Property tax bills are mailed in November of each year based on the previous January 1 valuation and full payment is due by March 31 of the following year.⁴

¹ Both real property and tangible personal property are subject to tax. Section 192.001(12), F.S., defines “real property” as land, buildings, fixtures, and all other improvements to land. Section 192.001(11)(d), F.S., defines “tangible personal property” as all goods, chattels, and other articles of value capable of manual possession and whose chief value is intrinsic to the article itself.

² Property must be valued at “just value” for purposes of property taxation, unless the State Constitution provides otherwise. FLA. CONST. art VII, s. 4. Just value has been interpreted by the courts to mean the fair market value that a willing buyer would pay a willing seller for the property in an arm’s-length transaction. *See, e.g., Walter v. Schuler*, 176 So. 2d 81 (Fla. 1965); *Deltona Corp. v. Bailey*, 336 So. 2d 1163 (Fla. 1976); *S. Bell Tel. & Tel. Co. v. Dade Cnty.*, 275 So. 2d 4 (Fla. 1973).

³ *See* ss. 192.001(2) and (16), F.S.

⁴ Sections 197.162 and 197.322, F.S.; *see also* Florida Department of Revenue, Florida Property Tax Calendar, available at: <https://floridarevenue.com/property/Documents/taxcalendar.pdf> (last visited Feb. 25, 2025).

The State Constitution prohibits the state from levying ad valorem taxes⁵ and limits the Legislature's authority to provide for property valuations at less than just value, unless expressly authorized.⁶

Property Tax Exemptions and Discounts for Veterans

The State Constitution provides several property tax exemptions and discounts for disabled veterans and their surviving spouses. These include:

- A veteran with a total and permanent service-connected disability is entitled to a complete exemption for property owned and used as a homestead.⁷
- A veteran with a total service-connected disability that confines him or her to a wheelchair is entitled to a complete exemption for property owned and used as a homestead.⁸ Upon the veteran's death, the exemption carries over to the veteran's unremarried surviving spouse.⁹
- The unremarried surviving spouse of a veteran who died while on active duty is entitled to a complete exemption for property owned and used as a homestead if the veteran was a permanent resident of Florida on the day he or she died.¹⁰
- Certain combat-disabled veterans who are age 65 or older are entitled to a discount on their homestead property taxes.¹¹ The discount is calculated as a percentage equal to the percentage of the veteran's permanent, service-connected disability.¹² The discount is applied as a reduction to the taxable value of the homestead property.¹³

Ad Valorem Tax Exemption for Disabled Ex-Servicemembers

Article VII, s. 3(b) of the State Constitution, requires that general law establish an exemption of property tax for widows and widowers, and persons who are blind or totally and permanently disabled. The value of these exemptions may be provided by general law, with a constitutional minimum of \$500.¹⁴ Subsections (1) and (2) of s. 196.101, F.S., exempt the total value of a homestead used and owned by a person who is totally and permanently disabled.

Section 196.24, F.S.,¹⁵ provides a \$5,000 property tax exemption to any resident ex-servicemember¹⁶ who was honorably discharged and has been disabled to a degree of 10 percent

⁵ FLA. CONST. art. VII, s. 1(a).

⁶ See FLA. CONST. art. VII, s. 4.

⁷ FLA. CONST. art. VII, s. 3(b); s. 196.081, F.S.

⁸ FLA. CONST. art. VII, s. 3(b); s. 196.091(1), F.S.

⁹ Section 196.091(3), F.S.

¹⁰ FLA. CONST. art. VII, s. 6(f); s. 196.081(4) F.S.

¹¹ FLA. CONST. art. VII, s. 6(e); s. 196.082, F.S.

¹² Section 196.082(2), F.S.

¹³ Section 196.082(6), F.S.

¹⁴ FLA. CONST. art. VII, s. 3(b).

¹⁵ This statutory provision was created by ch. 69-55, L.O.F. However, it was preceded by s. 192.11, F.S., as authorized by Art. IX, s. 9 of the State Constitution (1885). That provision in the constitution provided that: "There shall be exempt from taxation property to the value of five hundred dollars to every widow and to every person who is a bona fide resident of the State and has lost a limb or been disabled in war or by misfortune."

¹⁶ Section 196.012(19), F.S., defines "ex-servicemember" as any person who has served as a member of the United States Armed Forces on active duty or state active duty, a member of the Florida National Guard, or a member of the United States Reserve Forces.

or more by misfortune or while serving during a period of wartime service.¹⁷ This exemption is extended to an unmarried surviving spouse of a disabled ex-servicemember.¹⁸

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill amends s. 196.24, F.S., to increase the value of the ad valorem tax exemption for disabled ex-servicemembers from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2025.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

Article VII, s. 18(b) of the State Constitution provides that except upon the approval of each house of the Legislature by a two-thirds vote of the membership, the Legislature may not enact, amend, or repeal any general law if the anticipated effect of doing so would be to reduce the authority that municipalities or counties have to raise revenue in the aggregate, as such authority existed on February 1, 1989. The mandate requirement does not apply to laws having an insignificant impact,¹⁹ which for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 is forecast at approximately \$2.4 million.

The Revenue Estimating Conference has not yet adopted an impact for this bill, though it is likely this bill will have a significant negative impact on local government revenue. Therefore, this bill may be a mandate subject to the requirements of Art. VII, s. 18(b) of the State Constitution.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

Article VII, s. 19 of the State Constitution requires that legislation that increases or creates taxes or fees be passed by a 2/3 vote of each chamber in a bill with no other

¹⁷ The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs determines the severity of a veteran's disability based on evidence submitted by the veteran or present in the veteran's military records. This results in a disability rating from 0% to 100% in 10% increments. U.S. DEP'T. OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, *Compensation*, available at: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/rates-index.asp> (last visited Feb. 25, 2025).

¹⁸ Section 196.24(1), F.S.

¹⁹ FLA. CONST. art. VII, s. 18(d). An insignificant fiscal impact is the amount not greater than the average statewide population for the applicable fiscal year multiplied by \$0.10. See Fla. S. Comm. on Cmty. Affairs, *Interim Report 2012-115: Insignificant Impact*, (Sept. 2011), available at: <http://www.flsenate.gov/PublishedContent/Session/2012/InterimReports/2012-115ca.pdf> (last visited Feb. 26, 2025).

subject. The bill does not increase or create new taxes or fees. Thus, the constitutional requirements related to new or increased taxes or fees do not apply.

E. **Other Constitutional Issues:**

None identified.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. **Tax/Fee Issues:**

The Revenue Estimating Conference has not yet adopted an impact for this bill, but it is likely to have a significant negative impact on local government revenue.

B. **Private Sector Impact:**

Citizens receiving the tax exemption will benefit from its increased value.

C. **Government Sector Impact:**

Local governments will likely see a negative fiscal impact from increasing tax exemptions.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

Because the bill has an effective date of July 1, 2025, property appraisers may face challenges in implementing the bill in its first year while also adhering to the state constitutional requirement for property to be assessed on January 1.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends section 196.24 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

A. **Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. **Amendments:**

None.



577630

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate

.
. .
. .
. .
. .

House

The Committee on Community Affairs (Arrington) recommended the following:

Senate Amendment (with title amendment)

Between lines 28 and 29

insert:

Section 2. The amendment to s. 196.24, Florida Statutes,
made by this act first applies to the 2026 tax roll.

===== T I T L E A M E N D M E N T =====

And the title is amended as follows:

Delete line 5



577630

11 and insert:
12 servicemembers; providing applicability; providing an
13 effective date.

By Senator Arrington

25-00737-25

2025218__

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to tax exemption for disabled ex-
3 servicemembers; amending s. 196.24, F.S.; increasing
4 the value of a tax exemption for certain disabled ex-
5 servicemembers; providing an effective date.

6
7 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

8
9 Section 1. Subsection (1) of section 196.24, Florida
10 Statutes, is amended to read:

11 196.24 Exemption for disabled ex-servicemember or surviving
12 spouse; evidence of disability.—

13 (1) Any ex-servicemember, as defined in s. 196.012, who is
14 a bona fide resident of the state, who was discharged under
15 honorable conditions, and who has been disabled to a degree of
16 10 percent or more by misfortune or while serving during a
17 period of wartime service as defined in s. 1.01(14) is entitled
18 to the exemption from taxation provided for in s. 3(b), Art. VII
19 of the State Constitution as provided in this section. Property
20 to the value of \$10,000 ~~\$5,000~~ of such a person is exempt from
21 taxation. The production by him or her of a certificate of
22 disability from the United States Government or the United
23 States Department of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor before
24 the property appraiser of the county wherein the ex-
25 servicemember's property lies is prima facie evidence of the
26 fact that he or she is entitled to the exemption. The
27 unremarried surviving spouse of such a disabled ex-servicemember
28 is also entitled to the exemption.

29 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.



Florida Senate

Kristen Arrington

Senator, District 25

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Committees:
Commerce & Tourism
Vice Chair

Agriculture,
Environment, and
General Government
Appropriations

Transportation,
Tourism, and Economic
Development
Appropriations

Environment and
Natural Resources

Fiscal Policy

Governmental
Oversight and
Accountability

Transportation

February 5, 2025

Elizabeth Fleming
315 Knott Building
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Dear Elizabeth,

I am respectfully requesting that you place SB 218 on the agenda for the next Community Affairs Committee meeting at your earliest opportunity.

SB 218, Tax Exemptions for Disabled Ex-Servicemembers, will amend Florida state law to increase the property tax exemption for disabled ex-servicemembers from \$5,000 to \$10,000. Under this new legislation, the value of tax exemptions for certain disabled ex-servicemembers will increase.

To qualify for this exemption, an ex-servicemember must be a Florida resident, have been discharged under honorable conditions, and have a disability of 10 percent or more that was either caused by misfortune or occurred during wartime service. The exemption applies to the value of the property, meaning that \$10,000 of the property's assessed value will be exempt from taxation. Veterans can prove their disability status by presenting a certificate from the United States Government or the Department of Veterans Affairs to their county property appraiser. The bill also maintains the existing provision that allows the unremarried surviving spouse of a disabled ex-servicemember to claim the same tax exemption.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach me at (407) 973-4070. Thank you for your consideration in placing SB 218 on the next committee agenda.

Respectfully,

Senator Kristen Arrington

CC: The Honorable Stan McClain, Chair
The Honorable Randy Fine, Vice Chair

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Community Affairs

BILL: SB 384

INTRODUCER: Senator Burton

SUBJECT: Annexing State-owned Lands

DATE: February 28, 2025

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Hackett	Fleming	CA	Pre-meeting
2.	_____	_____	EN	_____
3.	_____	_____	RC	_____

I. Summary:

SB 384 amends the procedure for municipal annexation to require a municipality to notify the local legislative delegation prior to the first public hearing on a proposal to annex state-owned lands.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2025.

II. Present Situation:

Municipal Annexation

A municipality may propose to annex any area of contiguous, compact, unincorporated territory by ordinance or may be petitioned for annexation by owner(s) of “contiguous... and reasonably compact” real property.¹ An area is considered “contiguous” if a substantial part of its boundary is coterminous with a part of the boundary of the municipality.² An area is compact if it is concentrated in a single area and does not create enclaves, pockets, or finger areas.³ All lands to be annexed must be in the same county as the annexing municipality.⁴

The governing body of a municipality may only propose annexation of an area that is contiguous, reasonably compact, and is either:⁵

- Developed for “urban purposes,” which is defined as having a resident population or at least two persons per acre, having a resident population of at least one person per acre if the area is subdivided into lots where at least 60 percent of the total number of lots are 1 acre or less in

¹ Sections 171.0413(1) and 171.044(1), F.S.

² Section 171.031(11), F.S.

³ Section 171.031(12), F.S.

⁴ Section 171.045, F.S.

⁵ Section 171.043, F.S.

size, or at least 60 percent of the total number of lots meet one of the preceding definitions and at least 60 percent of the total acreage not used for non-residential “urban purposes” is subdivided into lots of 5 acres or less;

- Lies between the municipal boundary and an area developed for “urban purposes”; or
- Adjacent, on at least 60 percent of its external boundary, to any combination of the municipal boundary and areas developed for “urban purposes.”

A municipality may begin the annexation process by adopting a non-emergency ordinance.⁶ The municipality is required to hold two advertised public meetings before the adoption of the ordinance, one held on a weekday at least 7 days after the publication of the first advertisement and one held on a weekday at least 5 days after the publication of the second advertisement. At least 10 days prior to the first public meeting, the governing body of the municipality must provide written notice to all residents and property owners in the area proposed for annexation.⁷ The notice must contain the annexation proposal, the time and location of the public meeting, and locations where the proposed ordinance may be inspected by the public.

Before adopting an annexation ordinance, a municipality is required to prepare a feasibility study containing:⁸

- Plans to provide urban services to the area to be annexed;
- A map or maps of the municipality and adjacent territory showing the present and proposed municipal boundaries, the present major trunk water mains and sewer interceptors and outfalls, the proposed extensions of such mains and outfalls, and the general land use pattern in the area to be annexed;
- A statement certifying the area meets the annexation criteria specified in s. 171.043, F.S.; and
- A statement setting forth the plans of the municipality for extending to the area to be annexed each major municipal service performed within the municipality at the time of annexation.

The governing body of the municipality must file a copy of the report with the governing body of the county within 15 days of the commencement of annexation procedures.⁹ Failure to submit the report to the county in a timely manner may invalidate the annexation.

The municipality must submit the adopted annexation ordinance to a referendum in the area to be annexed.¹⁰ The municipality may also choose to submit the ordinance to the voters of the municipality for approval. If more than 70 percent of the area to be annexed is not owned by registered voters, the municipality must obtain the consent of landowners owning at least 50 percent of the area to be annexed before conducting the referendum.¹¹

The referendum may be conducted during the next regularly scheduled election or at a special election.¹² The referendum must not be held until at least 30 days after the adoption of the ordinance and must be advertised in a newspaper of general circulation in the area to be

⁶ Section 171.0413(1), F.S. A non-emergency ordinance is adopted using standing procedures specified by s. 166.041, F.S.

⁷ Section 171.042(3), F.S.

⁸ Section 171.042(1), F.S.

⁹ Section 171.042(2), F.S.

¹⁰ Section 171.0413(2), F.S.

¹¹ Section 171.0413(5), F.S.

¹² Section 171.0413(2)(a), F.S.

annexed.¹³ If the referendum is approved by the voters, the annexation occurs on the effective date provided by the ordinance.¹⁴ If the voters reject annexation, the municipality may not propose annexation of the same area in the 2 years following the referendum.

If the area to be annexed has no registered electors, the area may be annexed without a referendum if the municipality obtains the consent of landowners representing both 50 percent of acreage and 50 percent of the parcels in the area to be annexed.¹⁵

Alternatively, the owner(s) of real property in a contiguous, reasonably compact and unincorporated area of the county may petition a municipality for annexation.¹⁶ The municipality must determine that all landowners in the area to be annexed have signed the petition and publish notice of the annexation before passing an ordinance annexing the area. A copy of the ordinance, including a map and a metes and bounds legal description of the area, must be filed with the clerk of the circuit court, the chief administrative officer of the county, and the Department of State within 7 days after adopting the annexation ordinance. An area may not be annexed using this process if the annexation would result in the creation of an enclave.¹⁷

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 1 amends s. 171.0413, F.S., to provide that, upon advertising for the first public hearing on adopting an ordinance proposing to annex state-owned lands, a municipality must notify by writing or e-mail the legislative delegation of the county in which the land is located.

Sections 2 and 3 reenact ss. 101.6102 and 171.042, F.S. for the purpose of incorporation.

Section 4 provides that the bill takes effect July 1, 2025.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

¹³ Section 171.0413(2)(a)-(b), F.S.

¹⁴ Section 171.0413(2)(e), F.S.

¹⁵ Section 171.0413(6), F.S.

¹⁶ Section 171.044, F.S.

¹⁷ Section 171.044(5), F.S.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

The bill substantially amends s. 171.0413, Florida Statutes. The bill reenacts ss. 101.6102 and 171.042, Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.



756800

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate

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. .
. .

House

The Committee on Community Affairs (Burton) recommended the following:

Senate Amendment (with title amendment)

Delete line 33

and insert:

in writing or by e-mail, notify each member of the legislative

===== T I T L E A M E N D M E N T =====

And the title is amended as follows:

Delete lines 4 - 5

and insert:



11 proposing to annex state-owned lands to notify each
12 member of the legislative delegation of the county at
13 a certain time;

By Senator Burton

12-00217-25

2025384__

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to annexing state-owned lands;
3 amending s. 171.0413, F.S.; requiring a municipality
4 proposing to annex state-owned lands to notify the
5 county legislative delegation at a certain time;
6 reenacting ss. 101.6102(5) and 171.042, F.S., relating
7 to mail ballot elections and limitations and
8 prerequisites to annexation, respectively, to
9 incorporate the amendment made to s. 171.0413, F.S.,
10 in references thereto; providing an effective date.

11
12 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

13
14 Section 1. Subsection (1) of section 171.0413, Florida
15 Statutes, is amended to read:

16 171.0413 Annexation procedures.—Any municipality may annex
17 contiguous, compact, unincorporated territory in the following
18 manner:

19 (1) An ordinance proposing to annex an area of contiguous,
20 compact, unincorporated territory must ~~shall~~ be adopted by the
21 governing body of the annexing municipality pursuant to the
22 procedure for the adoption of a nonemergency ordinance
23 established by s. 166.041.

24 (a) ~~Prior to~~ the adoption of the ordinance of
25 annexation, the local governing body shall hold at least two
26 advertised public hearings. The first public hearing must ~~shall~~
27 be on a weekday at least 7 days after the day that the first
28 advertisement is published. The second public hearing must ~~shall~~
29 be held on a weekday at least 5 days after the day that the

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2025384__

30 second advertisement is published. Each such ordinance may ~~shall~~
31 propose only one reasonably compact area to be annexed.

32 (b) A municipality seeking to annex state-owned lands must,
33 in writing or by e-mail, notify the county legislative
34 delegation of the county in which the land is located when the
35 advertisement for the first public hearing is published.

36 (c) Before ~~However, prior to~~ the ordinance of annexation
37 becomes becoming effective, a referendum on annexation must
38 ~~shall~~ be held as set out below, and, if approved by the
39 referendum, the ordinance shall become effective 10 days after
40 the referendum or as otherwise provided in the ordinance, but
41 not more than 1 year following the date of the referendum.

42 Section 2. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
43 made by this act to section 171.0413, Florida Statutes, in a
44 reference thereto, subsection (5) of section 101.6102, Florida
45 Statutes, is reenacted to read:

46 101.6102 Mail ballot elections; limitations.—

47 (5) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit
48 the use of a mail ballot election in a municipal annexation
49 referendum requiring separate vote of the registered electors of
50 the annexing municipality and of the area proposed to be
51 annexed. If a mail ballot election is authorized for a municipal
52 annexation referendum, the provisions of ss. 101.6101-101.6107
53 shall control over any conflicting provisions of s. 171.0413.

54 Section 3. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment
55 made by this act to section 171.0413, Florida Statutes, in
56 references thereto, section 171.042, Florida Statutes, is
57 reenacted to read:

58 171.042 Prerequisites to annexation.—

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59 (1) Before commencing the annexation procedures under s.
60 171.0413, the governing body of the municipality shall prepare a
61 feasibility study setting forth the plans to provide urban
62 services to any area to be annexed, and the feasibility study
63 must include the following:

64 (a) A map or maps of the municipality and adjacent
65 territory showing the present and proposed municipal boundaries,
66 the present major trunk water mains and sewer interceptors and
67 outfalls, the proposed extensions of such mains and outfalls, as
68 required in paragraph (c), and the general land use pattern in
69 the area to be annexed.

70 (b) A statement certifying that the area to be annexed
71 meets the criteria in s. 171.043.

72 (c) A statement setting forth the plans of the municipality
73 for extending to the area to be annexed each major municipal
74 service performed within the municipality at the time of
75 annexation. Specifically, such plans must:

76 1. Provide for extending urban services except as otherwise
77 provided in this subsection to the area to be annexed on the
78 date of annexation on substantially the same basis and in the
79 same manner as such services are provided within the rest of the
80 municipality before annexation.

81 2. Provide for the extension of existing municipal water
82 and sewer services into the area to be annexed so that, when
83 such services are provided, property owners in the area to be
84 annexed will be able to secure public water and sewer service
85 according to the policies in effect in such municipality for
86 extending water and sewer lines to individual lots or
87 subdivisions.

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2025384__

88 3. If extension of major trunk water mains and sewer mains
89 into the area to be annexed is necessary, set forth a proposed
90 timetable for construction of such mains as soon as possible
91 following the effective date of annexation.

92 4. Set forth the method under which the municipality plans
93 to finance extension of services into the area to be annexed.

94 (2) Not fewer than 15 days before commencing the annexation
95 procedures under s. 171.0413, the governing body of the
96 municipality shall file a copy of the feasibility study required
97 by this section with the board of county commissioners of the
98 county in which the municipality is located. Failure to timely
99 file the feasibility study as required in this subsection may be
100 the basis for a cause of action to invalidate the annexation.

101 (3) The governing body of the municipality shall, not less
102 than 10 days prior to the date set for the first public hearing
103 required by s. 171.0413(1), mail a written notice to each person
104 who resides or owns property within the area proposed to be
105 annexed. The notice must describe the annexation proposal, the
106 time and place for each public hearing to be held regarding the
107 annexation, and the place or places within the municipality
108 where the proposed ordinance may be inspected by the public. A
109 copy of the notice must be kept available for public inspection
110 during the regular business hours of the office of the clerk of
111 the governing body.

112 Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.



THE FLORIDA SENATE

Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100

COMMITTEES:

Health Policy, *Chair*
Judiciary, *Vice Chair*
Agriculture
Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment,
and General Government
Appropriations Committee on Health
and Human Services
Banking and Insurance
Fiscal Policy
Rules

SENATOR COLLEEN BURTON

12th District

February 11, 2025

The Honorable Stan McClain
312 Senate Office Building
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Chair McClain,

I respectfully request SB 384 Annexing State Owned Lands be placed on the Community Affairs agenda at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Colleen Burton".

Colleen Burton
State Senator, District 12

CC: Elizabeth Fleming, Staff Director
Tatiana Warden, Committee Administrative Assistant

REPLY TO:

- 1375 Havendale Blvd., NW Winter Haven, Florida 33881 (863) 413-1529
- 408 Senate Building, 404 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100 (850) 487-5012

Senate's Website: www.flsenate.gov

Ben Albritton
President of the Senate

Jason Brodeur
President Pro Tempore