

1                                   A bill to be entitled  
 2           An act relating to the Office of the Blue Economy;  
 3           amending s. 20.60, F.S.; establishing the Office of  
 4           the Blue Economy within the Department of Commerce;  
 5           creating s. 288.102, F.S.; providing legislative  
 6           findings; providing definitions; providing duties of  
 7           the Office of the Blue Economy; creating the Marine  
 8           and Maritime Resources Grant Program within the Office  
 9           of the Blue Economy; requiring the Office of the Blue  
 10          Economy to review and certify certain applications;  
 11          authorizing the Office of the Blue Economy to consult  
 12          with certain entities; requiring the department to  
 13          review certified applications and authorizing the  
 14          department to provide grant funds to certain projects;  
 15          authorizing the department to identify projects and  
 16          solicit proposals that meet certain requirements;  
 17          authorizing the department to administer certain  
 18          contracts; authorizing the department to adopt rules;  
 19          requiring the department to annually provide a certain  
 20          report to the Governor and the Legislature; providing  
 21          an appropriation; providing an effective date.

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 23   Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:  
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25           Section 1. Paragraph (a) of subsection (3) of section

26 | 20.60, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

27 |       20.60 Department of Commerce; creation; powers and  
28 | duties.—

29 |       (3)(a) The following divisions and offices of the  
30 | Department of Commerce are established:

- 31 |       1. The Division of Economic Development.
- 32 |       2. The Division of Community Development.
- 33 |       3. The Division of Workforce Services.
- 34 |       4. The Division of Finance and Administration.
- 35 |       5. The Division of Information Technology.
- 36 |       6. The Office of the Secretary.
- 37 |       7. The Office of Economic Accountability and Transparency,

38 | which shall:

39 |       a. Oversee the department's critical objectives as  
40 | determined by the secretary and make sure that the department's  
41 | key objectives are clearly communicated to the public.

42 |       b. Organize department resources, expertise, data, and  
43 | research to focus on and solve the complex economic challenges  
44 | facing the state.

45 |       c. Provide leadership for the department's priority issues  
46 | that require integration of policy, management, and critical  
47 | objectives from multiple programs and organizations internal and  
48 | external to the department; and organize and manage external  
49 | communication on such priority issues.

50 |       d. Promote and facilitate key department initiatives to

51 address priority economic issues and explore data and identify  
52 opportunities for innovative approaches to address such economic  
53 issues.

54 e. Promote strategic planning for the department.

55 8. The Office of the Blue Economy.

56 Section 2. Section 288.102, Florida Statutes, is created  
57 to read:

58 288.102 Office of the Blue Economy; grant program.-

59 (1) The Florida Legislature finds that marine and maritime  
60 resources play a vital role in the state. The Legislature highly  
61 values the partnership between the state and its universities  
62 and the Florida College System and finds that through this  
63 collaboration significant innovation and investment are driven  
64 in targeted industries.

65 (2) For purposes of this section, the term:

66 (a) "Blue economy" means the economic uses of marine and  
67 maritime resources with a focus on sustainable practices that  
68 benefit the long-term outlook of relevant industry sectors and  
69 the competitive positioning of the state in a global economy.

70 (b) "Marine and maritime resources" means ocean and  
71 coastal resources, including, but not limited to, marine and  
72 maritime industries such as shipyards, marinas, marine  
73 terminals, piers, fishing, aquaculture, seafood processing,  
74 commercial diving, and marine transportation; marine biomedical  
75 research; floating and amphibious housing; tourism; and outdoor

76 recreational activities, including, but not limited to, boating  
77 and industry sectors dependent on such activities.

78 (c) "Targeted industry" means any industry identified in  
79 the most recent list of target industries provided to the  
80 Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the  
81 House of Representatives in accordance with s. 288.005(7).

82 (3) The Office of the Blue Economy shall:

83 (a) Support the state's economy by connecting the state's  
84 ocean and coastal resources to economic development strategies  
85 that enhance or contribute to the blue economy with a focus on  
86 research and development, technological innovation, emerging  
87 industries, strategic business recruitment, public and private  
88 funding opportunities, and workforce training and education.

89 (b) Survey state universities and Florida College System  
90 institutions on the development of academic research relating to  
91 the blue economy across all disciplines. The office shall  
92 encourage collaboration between state universities and Florida  
93 College System institutions with overlapping areas of academic  
94 research. The office shall publish on the department's website  
95 information on such collaboration and the current research  
96 inventory.

97 (c) Collaborate with relevant industries to identify  
98 economic challenges that may be solved through innovation in the  
99 blue economy by commercializing or otherwise providing public  
100 access to academic research and resources.

101 (d) Develop and facilitate a pipeline of academic  
102 research, commercialization, accelerator programs, and startup  
103 funding.

104 (e) Publish on the department's website reports on the  
105 number, growth, and average wages of jobs included in the blue  
106 economy. Such reports shall identify and address any relevant  
107 labor shortages projected by the Labor Market Estimating  
108 Conference pursuant to s. 216.136(7).

109 (f) Educate other state and local entities on the  
110 interests of the blue economy and how such entities may  
111 positively address environmental issues while simultaneously  
112 considering the economic impact of their policies.

113 (g) Communicate the state's role as an integral component  
114 of the blue economy by promoting the state on national and  
115 international platforms and other appropriate forums as the  
116 premier destination for convening on pertinent subject matters.

117 (4) The Marine and Maritime Resources Grant Program is  
118 created within the Office of the Blue Economy to promote  
119 economic development by connecting the state's marine and  
120 maritime resources to state universities and Florida College  
121 System institutions to contribute or enhance relevant industry  
122 sectors.

123 (a) The Office of the Blue Economy shall review and  
124 certify applications for grant funding from state universities  
125 and Florida College System institutions and may consult with the

126 Department of Education, CareerSource Florida, Inc., the Office  
127 of Reimagining Education and Career Help, and other relevant  
128 agencies, as appropriate.

129 (b) The department shall review applications certified by  
130 the Office of the Blue Economy under paragraph (a) and may  
131 authorize and provide grant funds to projects that promote:

132 1. Research and development and technological innovation  
133 with the goal of commercialization.

134 2. Strategic business recruitment and economic enhancement  
135 in a targeted industry with the goal of capital investment and  
136 high wage job growth.

137 3. Workforce training and education in support of  
138 subparagraph 1. or subparagraph 2.

139 (c) The department may identify projects and solicit  
140 applications for projects that meet the requirements of  
141 paragraph (b).

142 (d) The department may administer contracts for projects  
143 approved and funded pursuant to this section.

144 (5) The department may adopt rules to administer this  
145 section.

146 (6) By December 30, 2025, and each December 30 thereafter,  
147 the department shall provide to the Governor, the President of  
148 the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a  
149 detailed report demonstrating the economic benefits of the  
150 Office of the Blue Economy and the development of emerging

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151 marine and maritime industries or technologies.

152       Section 3. For the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the sum of \$1  
153 million in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the General  
154 Revenue Fund to the Department of Commerce to administer  
155 contracts funded by the Marine and Maritime Resources Grant  
156 Program under s. 288.102, Florida Statutes.

157       Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2024.