

HB 1559

2026

A bill to be entitled
An act relating to the Coconut Grove Playhouse, Miami-Dade County; providing legislative intent; requiring Miami-Dade County to transfer the existing property interest in the Coconut Grove Playhouse to the Town of Bay Harbor Islands; providing duties of the town; providing an effective date.

WHEREAS, the Coconut Grove Playhouse is a historic and cultural landmark of the State of Florida, significant to Miami-Dade County and to the people of this state, and

WHEREAS, the State of Florida, through prior conveyance, placed restrictive covenants and preservation obligations upon the Coconut Grove Playhouse property, requiring its continued use and protection for public, historic, and cultural purposes, and

WHEREAS, the Department of Environmental Protection has issued directives to Miami-Dade County regarding the preservation and stabilization of the playhouse property, and

WHEREAS, in a letter dated March 1, 2019, the Division of Historical Resources of the Department of State found that the county's plan to demolish the playhouse structure and restore two exterior facades would be inappropriate and inconsistent with state and federal preservation standards, warned that demolition could lead to removal of the property from the

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26 National Register of Historic Places, and, citing s. 267.061(2) (b), Florida Statutes, recommended that the county evaluate feasible alternatives, and

27 WHEREAS, despite negative evaluations of its plans, Miami-Dade County has argued that its lease with this state excuses 28 compliance with directives from the Department of State and the 29 requirements of s. 267.061, Florida Statutes, an argument made 30 in bad faith since the playhouse is owned by this state, and 31 state law obligations cannot be contracted away, and

32 WHEREAS, Miami-Dade County has failed to comply with state 33 directives, has permitted deterioration of the property in 34 breach of its obligations, and has pursued redevelopment actions 35 inconsistent with the public trust and preservation covenants, 36 and

37 WHEREAS, millions of dollars in public funds have been 38 allocated toward preservation and stabilization of the 39 playhouse, yet Miami-Dade County has failed to prioritize or 40 execute such preservation and stabilization, and

41 WHEREAS, it is the duty of the Legislature to safeguard 42 historic assets of this state, uphold public trust, and ensure 43 that public covenants are honored, NOW, THEREFORE,

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

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50 **Section 1.** The intent of this act is to:

51 (1) Protect the historic and cultural value of the Coconut
52 Grove Playhouse, Miami-Dade County.

53 (2) Enforce accountability for the state-owned Coconut
54 Grove Playhouse by reassigning stewardship away from Miami-Dade
55 County through a transfer of the property interest to the Town
56 of Bay Harbor Islands, Miami-Dade County, a municipality that is
57 capable of honoring both the public trust and historic
58 preservation covenants.

59 **Section 2.** (1) On July 1, 2026, Miami-Dade County shall
60 transfer the existing property interest in the Coconut Grove
61 Playhouse, Miami-Dade County, to the Town of Bay Harbor Islands,
62 Miami-Dade County, for the purposes of historic preservation,
63 public use, and cultural benefit.

64 (2) (a) Upon receiving the existing property interest in
65 the Coconut Grove Playhouse, the Town of Bay Harbor Islands
66 shall consult with the City of Miami, the Department of
67 Environmental Protection, and the Division of Historical
68 Resources of the Department of State on feasible and prudent
69 alternatives to the demolition or alteration of the playhouse,
70 as required under s. 267.061(2)(b), Florida Statutes, and on
71 every renovation it plans to perform to protect the historic and
72 cultural value of the property.

73 (b) The Town of Bay Harbor Islands shall, to the maximum
74 extent practicable, use public funds and other funds reserved
75 for the playhouse to:

76 1. Comply with the directives of the Department of
77 Environmental Protection, including:

78 a. Taking preservation actions as a condition of state
79 ownership and oversight.

80 b. Preserving the historic facade, roofline, and
81 architectural integrity of the playhouse.

82 c. Fulfilling obligations under the original state deed
83 covenants.

84 2. Fulfill its contract and fiduciary duty, including
85 complying with all restrictive covenants requiring preservation
86 and building stabilization for historic, cultural, and public
87 use.

88 **Section 3.** This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.