

**By** the Appropriations Committee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development; and Senator McClain

606-02504-26

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A bill to be entitled

An act relating to special district funding; amending s. 215.971, F.S.; revising agency agreements that provide state financial assistance to recipients or subrecipients to include specified special districts as an entity to which such agency may provide for the payment of invoices under specified circumstances; providing construction; amending s. 288.0656, F.S.; revising the definition of "rural community" to include specified special districts; providing an effective date.

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

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

215.971 Agreements funded with federal or state assistance.—

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

(h) If the agency agreement provides federal or state financial assistance to a county or municipality that is a rural community or rural area of opportunity as those terms are defined in s. 288.0656(2) or a special district whose geographic area, in whole or in part, is located in such county or

606-02504-26

2026214c1

30 municipality or an independent special district that provides  
31 water and wastewater services within a rural area of opportunity  
32 as that term is defined in s. 288.0656(2), a provision allowing  
33 the agency to provide for the payment of invoices to the county,  
34 municipality, ~~or~~ rural area of opportunity as that term is  
35 defined in s. 288.0656(2), or special district, for verified and  
36 eligible performance that has been completed in accordance with  
37 the terms and conditions set forth in the agreement. This  
38 provision is included to alleviate the financial hardships that  
39 such certain rural counties, and municipalities, or special  
40 districts encounter when administering agreements, and must be  
41 exercised by the agency if when a county, or municipality, or  
42 special district whose geographic area, in whole or in part, is  
43 located in such county or municipality or an independent special  
44 district that provides water and wastewater services within a  
45 rural area of opportunity as that term is defined in s.  
46 288.0656(2), demonstrates financial hardship, to the extent that  
47 federal or state law, rule, or other regulation allows such  
48 payments. This paragraph may not be construed to alter or limit  
49 any other provisions of federal or state law, rule, or other  
50 regulation.

51 Section 2. Paragraph (e) of subsection (2) of section  
52 288.0656, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

53 288.0656 Rural Economic Development Initiative.—

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

55 (e) "Rural community" means:

56 1. A county with a population of 75,000 or fewer.

57 2. A county with a population of 125,000 or fewer which is  
58 contiguous to a county with a population of 75,000 or fewer.

606-02504-26

2026214c1

59       3. A municipality or special district within a county  
60 described in subparagraph 1. or subparagraph 2.

61       4. An unincorporated federal enterprise community or an  
62 incorporated rural city with a population of 25,000 or fewer and  
63 an employment base focused on traditional agricultural or  
64 resource-based industries, located in a county not defined as  
65 rural, which has at least three or more of the economic distress  
66 factors identified in paragraph (c) and verified by the  
67 department.

68       5. An independent special district that provides water and  
69 wastewater services within a rural area of opportunity.

70  
71 For purposes of this paragraph, population shall be determined  
72 in accordance with the most recent official estimate pursuant to  
73 s. 186.901.

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