

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

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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.

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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.

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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.