

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

594-03335-26

2026214c2

1                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to special district funding; amending  
3           s. 215.971, F.S.; revising agency agreements that  
4           provide state financial assistance to recipients or  
5           subrecipients to include specified special districts  
6           as an entity to which such agency may provide for the  
7           payment of invoices under specified circumstances;  
8           providing construction; requiring state agencies to  
9           expedite payment requests from certain counties,  
10          municipalities, and special districts for a specified  
11          purpose; amending s. 288.0656, F.S.; revising the  
12          definition of "rural community" to include specified  
13          special districts; providing an effective date.

14  
15 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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17           Section 1. Paragraph (h) of subsection (1) of section  
18           215.971, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

19           215.971 Agreements funded with federal or state  
20           assistance.—

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

27           (h) If the agency agreement provides federal or state  
28           financial assistance to a county or municipality that is a rural  
29           community or rural area of opportunity as those terms are

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

57 Section 2. Paragraph (e) of subsection (2) of section  
58 288.0656, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

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59 288.0656 Rural Economic Development Initiative.—

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

61 (e) "Rural community" means:

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

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

65 3. A municipality or special district within a county  
66 described in subparagraph 1. or subparagraph 2.

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

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

76  
77 For purposes of this paragraph, population shall be determined  
78 in accordance with the most recent official estimate pursuant to  
79 s. 186.901.

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