

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 the term "rural community" to include
 13 specified special districts; providing an effective
 14 date.

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

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 18 Section 1. Paragraph (h) of subsection (1) of section
 19 215.971, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

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

22 (1) An agency agreement that provides state financial
 23 assistance to a recipient or subrecipient, as those terms are
 24 defined in s. 215.97, or that provides federal financial
 25 assistance to a subrecipient, as defined by applicable United

26 States Office of Management and Budget circulars, must include
 27 all of the following:

28 (h) If the agency agreement provides federal or state
 29 financial assistance to a county or municipality that is a rural
 30 community or rural area of opportunity as those terms are
 31 defined in s. 288.0656(2) or a special district located entirely
 32 within such county or municipality or an independent special
 33 district that provides water and wastewater services within a
 34 rural area of opportunity as defined in s. 288.0656(2), a
 35 provision allowing the agency to provide for the payment of
 36 invoices to such ~~the~~ county, municipality, or special district
 37 ~~rural area of opportunity as that term is defined in s.~~
 38 ~~288.0656(2),~~ for verified and eligible performance that has been
 39 completed in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth
 40 in the agreement. The provision is not intended to require
 41 reimbursement to such county, municipality, or special district
 42 for invoices paid, but to allow the agency to provide for the
 43 payment of invoices due. The agency shall expedite payment
 44 requests in order to facilitate the timely payment of invoices
 45 received by such county, municipality, or special district. This
 46 provision is included to alleviate the financial hardships that
 47 such ~~certain rural~~ counties, and municipalities, or special
 48 districts encounter when administering agreements, and must be
 49 exercised by the agency if ~~when~~ a county, ~~or~~ municipality, or
 50 special district located entirely within such county or

51 municipality or an independent special district that provides
 52 water and wastewater services within a rural area of
 53 opportunity, as defined in s. 288.0656(2), demonstrates
 54 financial hardship, to the extent that federal or state law,
 55 rule, or other regulation allows such payments. This paragraph
 56 may not be construed to alter or limit any other provisions of
 57 federal or state law, rule, or other regulation.

58 Section 2. Paragraph (e) of subsection (2) of section
 59 288.0656, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

60 288.0656 Rural Economic Development Initiative.—

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

62 (e) "Rural community" means:

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

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

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

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

75 5. An independent special district that provides water and

76 | wastewater services within a rural area of opportunity.

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

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