

PALM BEACH COUNTY

2024 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

GENERAL GOVERNMENT ISSUES



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STATEMENT OF AFFILIATIONS

FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

As a member of the Florida Association of Counties (FAC), Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the 2024 FAC Legislative Program and Guiding Principles unless issues specifically conflict with Palm Beach County's position.

COUNTY COALITION FOR RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT OF LAKE OKEECHOBEE

As a member, Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the 2024 State Legislative Priorities of the 16 County Coalition, unless issues specifically conflict with Palm Beach County's position.

SOUTHEAST FLORIDA REGIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE COMPACT

As a member, Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact 2024 State Climate, Energy and Resilience Legislative Priorities and Principles unless issues specifically conflict with Palm Beach County's position.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GLADES REGIONAL INITIATIVES

In an effort to provide economic growth and stimulus to the region surrounding Lake Okeechobee, Palm Beach County has identified several legislative issues that will promote economic development and job creation in the Glades Region. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS**:

- Legislative initiatives and funding to implement components of the Glades Region Master Plan, which include:
 - Improvements to existing affordable housing units, as well as the development of new affordable housing units.
 - Stormwater improvements to enhance economic and housing development, as well as improve water quality and prevent flooding.
 - Mitigation of muck soils that result in construction cost premiums for buildings, infrastructure and roads.
- The continuation and enhancement of Small County Outreach Program (SCOP) funding for road reconstruction and repaving.
- Funding for the Everglades Restoration Agricultural Community Employment Training Program (ERACETP).

- Eligibility changes to ERACETP to encourage greater participation from Glades area students and businesses.
- Funding to ensure that the Glades Region has appropriate shelter facilities for emergencies.
- Funding for youth violence prevention programs.
- Funding to help improve infrastructure surrounding agricultural communities.
- Legislation to help farmers in their efforts to produce fruits and vegetables for our country and our community.

RURAL JOBS TAX CREDIT

This existing Rural Jobs Tax Credit is provided to new or expanding employers within one of 36 qualified rural areas (including Belle Glade, Pahokee and South Bay). It is valued up to \$1,000 per new job and is good for a two-year period, plus a five-year carry-forward period. Depending on the number of current employees, an existing business has to have created at least 20 percent more jobs or 10 new employees one year prior to the date of application. No pre-approval is needed prior to the company's decision to locate in the qualified area. This credit may only be taken against the Florida Corporate Income Tax or Sales and Use Tax owed by the company to the State.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the enhancement of the Rural Jobs Tax Credit to:

- Remove the requirement that a minimum number of jobs be created at a new eligible business;
- Provide up to a \$2,500 tax credit for a new eligible business;
- At an existing business with less than 50 employees, provide for a 10 percent increase in the number of employees, allowing up to a \$2,000 tax credit per job created; and
- At an existing business with 50 or more employees, allow a \$1,500 tax credit per job created if the business adds at least 5 new employees.

FLORIDA'S FILM, TELEVISION, AND DIGITAL MEDIA

Florida's entertainment industry generates thousands of jobs for Florida workers, brings substantial new money to our local communities, spawns financial investment and tourism throughout the state, and can be an integral part of Florida's economic recovery. Working alongside the Palm Beach County Tourism Development Council:

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the performance-based Targeted Rebate Program. Only projects that provide the highest return on investment and economic benefits in Florida would qualify requiring a \$1.5 million minimum spend, 70 percent of film days to be in the state, 60 percent FL cast and crew with bonuses to encourage family-friendly projects, filming in underutilized areas, hiring Florida graduates and military veterans.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** programs to retain Florida's professionals and new graduates in these industries, thereby building the confidence to stay in Florida and move onto gainful high-skill, high-wage employment.

Palm Beach County also **SUPPORTS** the Film and Television Commission’s education initiative, The Palm Beaches Student Showcase of Films, Florida’s largest student film competition and award show.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** film incentives for opioid awareness education funded through opioid settlement agreements.

BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH FUNDING

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** new and recurring funding for educational programs produced by local universities and state colleges in partnership with institutions such as Max Planck and Scripps of Florida. Biomedical research funding is beneficial to not only the residents of Palm Beach County, but to residents nationwide.

JOB GROWTH GRANT FUND

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** continued funding for the Florida Job Growth Grant Fund and other incentive programs to support the development of infrastructure and workforce training related to the expansion of economic development throughout the state.

VISIT FLORIDA

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** full funding for VISIT FLORIDA and removal of the agency’s sunset provision.

EQUESTRIAN TOURISM

From Wellington to Ocala to Pensacola, the equine industry makes a dramatic impact on the local economies hosting various multi-week events. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services estimates that the Florida horse industry generates an annual \$6.8 billion impact on the gross domestic product of Florida, providing more than 244,000 jobs in the State. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** promoting our equestrian industries as well as the investment of state tourism dollars for promotion of “Equine-Tourism” throughout the state.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The rapid rollout of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools and the proliferation of other forms of AI has brought about new economic development and innovation opportunities. The AI landscape is constantly evolving, generating unique oversight and regulatory challenges for state legislatures across the country.

Palm Beach County will **MONITOR** legislation regarding the development, use, and regulation of artificial intelligence.

SUBSTANCE USE AND MENTAL HEALTH

SUBSTANCE USE AND MENTAL HEALTH FUNDING

The human and economic costs of untreated substance use and mental illness in our state continue to rise. These costs include the criminalization of people with untreated mental illnesses, family erosion, substance use, job loss, domestic violence, homelessness, medical problems, crime and suicide. Often these issues arise because of unaddressed trauma. Florida must do more to invest and fund community-based and integrated mental healthcare and trauma informed care. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** increased funding for the region's managing entity, the Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network, to be utilized by care systems working collaboratively to reduce opioid use and addiction disorder, reduce suicides especially in young people, raise awareness, and create overall safer communities.

As the State of Florida receives lawsuit settlement dollars related to opioid and substance use cases, Palm Beach County encourages the state to set aside a portion of the settlement proceeds for a research and development grant program related to opioid use and addiction.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** funding efforts by the legislature for additional beds and treatment programs for mental health and substance use disorders with an emphasis on youth services and expectant mothers.

Palm Beach County also **SUPPORTS** funding efforts by the legislature for trauma informed care education and treatment, mental health awareness programs to reduce stigmatization and youth suicide prevention programs.

Lastly, Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** funding efforts by the legislature for evidence-based public therapeutic recreation programs in the treatment and prevention of chronic health conditions including substance use and behavioral disorders.

OPIOID AND SUBSTANCE USE

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** policy changes, as well as appropriations, to support providing life-saving interventions, medically-assisted detoxification programs, locations for expectant mothers to decrease the risk of complications and birth defects due to opioid and substance use, and diversions from the criminal justice system for those suffering from opioid addiction.

SOBER HOMES/STATE ATTORNEY ADDICTION RECOVERY TASK FORCE

The Palm Beach County State Attorney Addiction Recovery Task Force was created in 2016 to monitor operation of unregulated “sober homes,” prosecute fraudulent treatment and marketing practices, and recommend changes to laws and regulations for the protection of vulnerable people in recovery. In 2017, there were 642 opioid overdose deaths, according to figures released by the Palm Beach County Medical Examiner. Through efforts of the Task Force, in 2018, based on numbers from the Medical Examiner, opioid overdose deaths declined approximately 40%.

The Task Force was instrumental in the passage of landmark legislation addressing the treatment industry in 2017, and 2019-2023. These measures have certainly helped in our efforts to minimize the destructive effects of opioid use disorder as well as the fraud and abuse that had been commonplace in the industry.

Safe and supportive housing is critical in the recovery process. Operation of sober homes with no oversight or regulation can lead to, among other things, homelessness and relapse for those suffering from substance use. Fraudulent marketing and treatment practices can also have devastating effects on the lives of individuals who come to Palm Beach County for treatment. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the State Attorney Addiction Recovery Task Force, and their recommended statutory changes for the 2024 session.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

LIVE LOCAL ACT

The State of Florida has seen decades of rapid population growth. The steady influx of people relocating to the state, and particularly to South Florida, has made Palm Beach County one of the fastest-growing destinations for those seeking a place to call home. However, this mass migration has depleted residential rental units leading to significant rent increases and a lack of available housing.

In 2023, the legislature adopted the Live Local Act, which provided historic state investments in affordable housing programs. This act also preempted a local government’s requirements regarding zoning, density, and height to allow for streamlined development of affordable multifamily housing in commercial, industrial, and mixed-use zoned areas.

This legislation does not take into consideration that some industrial zoned land may not be appropriate for residential use. Local government’s use restrictions are implemented to ensure compatible land uses surrounding airports, which is required pursuant to Chapter 333, Florida Statutes. Residential land uses are not considered compatible with airport operations based on noise and other environmental concerns. The construction of affordable housing near airports may also result in the inadvertent creation of noise and environmental justice issues, which would affect the ability of airports to develop required improvements and diminish the state’s investment in Florida’s system of airports.

Additionally, local government height and use restrictions are implemented to ensure compatible land uses surrounding airports, which are also required pursuant to Chapter 333, Florida Statutes. The implementation

of height restrictions is necessary to protect airspace surrounding an airport to ensure the safe operation of aircraft.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation clarifying the Live Local Act does not preempt a local government's authority to adopt and enforce zoning to ensure compatible land use as provided in Chapter 333, Florida Statutes.

Some counties have limited vacant industrial acreage still available for economic development. In order to maintain a balance of economic development opportunities and housing availability, Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** allowing local governments to determine if affordable housing is appropriate on certain industrial zoned properties.

Local governments provide density bonuses to transit oriented developments (TODs) to encourage housing in certain areas. To prevent these density bonuses from becoming the new standard under which a local government's boundaries are eligible for developments qualifying under the Live Local Act, Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** exempting TODs from certain requirements under this law.

Palm Beach County also **SUPPORTS** state incentives for local governments that have implemented a dedicated funding source for affordable and workforce housing.

AFFORDABLE PROGRAM INCOME LIMITS

The State of Florida utilizes The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Area Median Income as the basis for establishing State program income limits and affordable housing maximum rents. To calculate Area Median Income, HUD uses U.S. Census Bureau data on median *family* income. Median *family* income figures are consistently higher than median *household* income figures, and their use results in higher income limits and higher maximum rents. Median *household* income is lower than median *family* income because family households usually earn more than non-family households do. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, *family* income typically runs 20-24% greater than *household* income in all geographies. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** encouraging the State to review its method of calculation of Area Median Income and consider revising the methodology to use median household income. This adjustment would provide income limits that would more accurately reflect the population's actual median income and better serve those targeted for assistance through affordable housing programs. This would also provide added funding for those populations with the greatest need while addressing the affordable housing crises nationwide.

HOMELESSNESS

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** efforts by members of the Legislature to identify and fund programs for the homeless. The County is experiencing a growing problem with homeless students, seniors, and veterans. The County proposes the following:

- Sober homes legislation that will provide options to prevent individuals who are forced to leave a home from becoming homeless.

- Full funding of the State Apartment Incentive Loan (SAIL) program from the State Housing Trust Fund.
- Funding for DCF Homeless Unified Challenge Grants that provide continuum of care wrap-around services for homelessness.
- Support mental health funding.
- Support Affordable Housing Task Force recommendations.
- Support additional funding to prevent college and university students, youth aging out of foster care, and unaccompanied minors from becoming homeless.
- Provide free or subsidized housing and food, as well as case management wrap around services.
- Support creation of and funding for the Florida Council on Poverty first proposed in 2016 under SB 556, which would conduct a review of policies and programs that move people out of poverty, develop strategies to address the causes of poverty in the state, and develop recommendations to reduce the percentage of people living in poverty in the state.

TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED PROGRAMS

Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) funding is an important funding source for Palm Tran, enabling Palm Beach County to provide the most economically challenged customers with public transportation when they are located outside of the fixed route service area, and to provide discounted fixed route bus passes. To maintain the existing level of services and accommodate the needs of TD residents, Palm Beach County has annually supported the TD program efforts with additional funding. This past fiscal year, the County's local contribution is \$2,399,711 of which \$348,547 is required.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** attempts to increase the funding to the TD program and to prevent diversion of these dollars for other purposes.

Additionally, Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** an appropriation for \$2 million to help offset the increase in local contribution made for the TD program.

CHILD WELFARE

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the following enhancements to Florida's statewide child welfare funding that together will improve the child welfare system in Palm Beach County and throughout the state.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the Florida Coalition for Children's (FCC) request for increased funding with recurring revenue for the agencies operating Florida's system of foster care and related services. The FCC is a statewide association of community-based care (CBC) lead agencies, which includes ChildNet Palm Beach and those agencies that directly serve Florida's abused, abandoned and neglected children. Since fiscal year 2013-2014, the number of children removed from their homes throughout Florida because of verified abuse, abandonment and neglect increased substantially. Annual increases in statewide child welfare funding have

not been sufficient to meet the needs of this expanding population. The increased appropriation of funds will enable lead agencies and their subcontracted service providers, in Palm Beach and throughout the state, to deliver a comprehensive range of high quality services sufficient to consistently and effectively meet the needs of Florida's expanded foster care population.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** full funding for Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Program.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** recommended changes to the CBC equity allocation model currently described in Section 409.991, F.S., to facilitate a more equitable distribution of any new core funding allocated to community-based care lead agencies throughout the state.

SENIOR WELFARE

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the Area Agency on Aging's legislative priorities, which include:

- Funding for Florida's Aging & Disability Resource Centers client services workload under the Statewide Medicaid Managed Long Term Care Program to reduce the risk of nursing home placement for seniors and adults with disabilities.
- Funding to serve at-risk seniors statewide on the Department of Elder Affairs waiting list for the Community Care/Home Care for the Elderly and the Alzheimer's Respite Care Programs.
- Appropriating 3.5 percent of administrative costs to the Department of Elder Affairs for Florida's Alzheimer's disease Initiative programs.
- Establishing an Adult Protective Services within the Community Care for Elderly Program to pay for the cost of emergency services provided to Adult Protective Services high-risk referrals received from the Department of Children and Families.

GUARDIANSHIP OVERSIGHT

A 2022 report published by a task force convened by the Florida Court Clerks and Comptrollers Association found that Florida had little statewide formalized guardianship case data collection or sharing processes in place. As a result, HB 1349, Guardianship Data Transparency was passed and signed into law in 2022.

The bill required the Clerks of Court Operations Corporation (CCOC) to create a guardianship database for judicial guardianship proceedings. The database will include the guardian's discipline history, registration status, compliance with statutory qualifications, and status of statutorily required reporting. The CCOC must establish a searchable, publicly accessible webpage for specific, limited, professional guardian information, and publish monthly reports on the state's guardianship system. The bill also required the Department of Elder Affairs, which regulates public and professional guardians, to publish professional guardian registration profiles online by July 1, 2023.

To ensure the protection of those unable to care for themselves, Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation that will increase transparency regarding existing guardianships in Florida and protect wards from fraud and abuse.

ADULTS/STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** additional funding for rate increases for services provided through the Agency for Persons with Disabilities. Currently, the rate crisis is causing many agencies to go out of business and others find it extremely difficult to attract and maintain staff. An 11% increase will establish funding at the 2003 level in actual dollars. In 2023, a \$79.6 million appropriation took approximately 387 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities off the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) waiver waitlist. Unfortunately, there are 22,372 individuals still on the waitlist.

DENTAL ACCESS

In response to a need for improved dental access and affordability, multiple states have introduced legislation including Florida. In 2020, various pieces of legislation were introduced to put patients first because the state scope of practice laws govern the activities that healthcare practitioners may engage in when caring for patients.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** efforts to make dental care more affordable and accessible. Palm Beach County continues to **SUPPORT** Palm Beach State College and Florida Atlantic University as they expand their dental programs and help to improve access for vulnerable populations.

PUBLIC RECORDS EXEMPTION FOR MEDICAL EXAMINER

Pursuant to Section 119.07(1), F.S., Medical Examiner Offices in Florida are mandated to release all documents reflecting their work product as public records, to include investigative reports, autopsy reports, toxicology reports and ancillary studies, as long as the cases do not meet criteria for exemption.

The vast majority of cases in which Medical Examiner Jurisdiction is assumed fall under the non-exempted category, to include deaths secondary to natural disease, and of accidental or suicidal manners. Autopsy reports include private information regarding an individual's life and medical history. Diagnoses that may have been made during the time the person was alive, as well as explicit personal identifiers such as tattoos, surgical and non-surgical scars, and descriptions of injuries, among other valuable personal information is included in an autopsy report. Medical records remain protected for 50 years following the death of the individual via HIPAA but that privacy status is lost when an autopsy is performed, as it becomes a public record.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation to amend Section 199.07(1), F.S., to provide for an exemption to withhold autopsy reports from public records to protect individual HIPAA rights and the privacy of loved ones.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH – PALM BEACH COUNTY BUILDINGS

The Florida Department of Health (DOH) operates and maintains several service locations throughout Palm Beach County. Two of these facilities are aging and in need of substantial maintenance and repairs. One of these facilities, located on 45th Street, is in need of a roof replacement as the existing roof has deteriorated beyond being serviceable and is at the end of its life cycle. Additionally, the DOH building on Clematis Street requires several updates including repainting and HVAC improvements.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** funding for maintenance and repairs at these two DOH facilities.

Additionally, the County **SUPPORTS** state funding for the new DOH building in Delray Beach, which will be constructed during Palm Beach County's South County Administrative Complex Redevelopment.

HISPANIC CULTURAL RESOURCE COMMUNITY CENTER

Palm Beach County is home to a large community of Hispanic people representing a variety of countries across Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. To meet the needs of this growing population the creation of a Hispanic Cultural Resource Community Center has been proposed. This location would provide social services to residents and offer education and understanding of our community's rich Hispanic heritage and culture. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the establishment of a Hispanic Cultural Resource Community Center to meet a critical need in our community.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY & EQUAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

PREEMPTION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT WAGE MANDATES

Palm Beach County first enacted a Living Wage Ordinance in 2003. The intent of the ordinance was to serve a public purpose by advancing the economic security of its citizens and promoting the creation of good jobs that allow working citizens to support themselves and their families with dignity above the poverty level. This ordinance recognizes the economic interests of its working citizens by assuring individuals working on county construction projects and in county transportation disadvantaged driving positions a living wage and the ability to better provide for the high cost of living in Palm Beach County. Palm Beach County **OPPOSES** any legislation preempting local wage mandates.

PUBLIC RECORDS EXEMPTION – COMPLAINTS OF DISCRIMINATION

Current law lists specific protected classes and specific types of discrimination that may change over time. By simplifying this language, all complaints of discrimination would be exempt, unless they fall under the remainder of the statute. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** simplifying the public records exemption for local

governments in matters of complaints of discrimination to simply “employment or places of public accommodation.”

In an effort to decrease the number of lengthy and expensive investigation, encourage the resolution of complaints of discrimination and improve the efficiency of the conciliation process, Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** exempting records of conciliation in local government’s efforts to resolve complaints relating to employment, housing or places of public accommodation. Palm Beach County also **SUPPORTS** a public records exemption in matters of human resources investigations involving local government, until that investigation is completed.

LOCAL PREFERENCES

Local preference programs hold great significance in fostering economic growth and community development at the local level. By giving preference to local businesses and contractors during county procurement opportunities, this program encourages the circulation of wealth within our community. It ensures that local businesses have a fair and equitable chance to compete and thrive, leading to increased job opportunities, tax revenue, and overall prosperity at home and throughout the region. Moreover, the local preference program helps to strengthen our community by promoting local entrepreneurship and encouraging investment in local infrastructure. That investment, in turn, contributes to the long-term sustainability and resilience of the region. Ultimately, by prioritizing local businesses, the local preference program plays a crucial role in building strong, vibrant, and self-sufficient communities.

As recommended by the National Institute for Governmental Procurement, local procurement preferences should “be implemented only as one of several criteria in a ‘best value’ evaluation and award process. Best value means the most advantageous balance of price, quality, and performance identified through competitive procurement methods in accordance with stated selection criteria.”

Palm Beach County **OPPOSES** legislative efforts to prohibit the application of local preference as one of several criteria in a best value evaluation and award process for public works projects when the projects are funded entirely by local revenues.

BUDGET & TAXATION

UNFUNDED MANDATES

The State Legislature has frequently passed legislation that compels local governments to provide a service, program, or benefit without providing the appropriate funding or a funding source. This compromises local governments’ ability to provide services requested by their local communities by diverting resources to these state-directed, unfunded mandates or cost shifts. In addition, as more and more mandates are created, local governments are faced with the burden of using local tax dollars to finance functions that they have little control over.

If the state requires a local government to provide a service or a higher service, the state must do a better job of identifying costs to local governments when passing new legislation and must provide funding or a funding source for every legislative initiative that imposes a cost on counties. Palm Beach County **OPPOSES** new unfunded mandates and unfunded state to county cost shifts. Additionally, Palm Beach County **OPPOSES** any action by the state to preempt the home rule authority of local governments or to restrict local governments' ability to levy ad valorem taxes.

OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING

Bills have been filed that would have prohibited local governments from regulating businesses, professions, and occupations within their governments, and would have vested that power within the state. Palm Beach County continues to **OPPOSE** such legislation.

ARTICLE V

The State should allow for the expansion of the \$65 mandatory court fee to be applied to civil cases in addition to its current application to criminal cases. Expansion of the fee would provide for additional revenue to fund the state court system. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the continuation and enhancement of the \$2 recording fee to be distributed to counties to fund court-related technology needs. Palm Beach County also **SUPPORTS** full funding for statewide traffic hearing officer programs.

Under existing law, counties are required to increase funding for courts by 1.5 percent a year. In recent years, counties successfully obtained an exemption from having to increase annual funding for court-related functions by 1.5 percent under Section 29.008, F.S. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** eliminating the requirements of Section 29.008(4)(a), F.S., that require counties to fund this increase.

JUDICIAL CIRCUIT ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

The Judicial Circuit Assessment Committee of the Florida court system has been formed to study whether there is a need to consolidate (i.e., reduce the number of) judicial circuits in this state. The committee will consider six criteria (Effectiveness, Efficiency, Access to Courts, Professionalism, Public Trust and Confidence, and Additional Criteria).

Florida's trial court system is comprised of circuit courts and county courts. Circuit courts oversee cases involving large money disputes; serious crimes (felonies); divorces, juvenile delinquency and dependency matters, and other family law matters; and probate (estate) matters. County courts oversee cases involving smaller monetary disputes, less serious criminal matters (misdemeanors), and traffic offenses.

Together, these two types of trial courts form a "judicial circuit." The state is divided into 20 judicial circuits. The geography of each judicial circuit includes one or more counties. Palm Beach County comprises the entirety of the 15th Judicial Circuit.

Palm Beach County will **MONITOR** the Judicial Circuit Assessment Committee to ensure that any decisions on consolidation with not adversely affect the functioning of the 15th Judicial Circuit, or the level of county funding required for court operations.

VACATION RENTALS

In 2011, the Florida Legislature passed HB 883, which blocked local governments from "regulating, restricting, or prohibiting" vacation rental properties. Recognizing that the 2011 legislation went too far, the Legislature passed HB 356 in 2014, restoring partial Home Rule authority to local governments. In effect, the law allowed counties to enact certain regulations (parking, occupancy standards, and local registration), but precluded them from passing regulations that prohibited vacation rentals or limited the duration and frequency of stays.

However, in 2018, HB 773 overturned the 2014 legislation and effectively took counties back to what was enacted in 2011. The effect is that local governments have few measures to regulate these uses in a way that would maintain the character of a residential neighborhood. Over the past few years, local governments have fielded numerous complaints about the operation of vacation rentals.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation that would provide local governments with reasonable authority to help govern the operation of vacation rentals in residential neighborhoods.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the Palm Beach County Tax Collector's request for amendment of Section 12.03 (1)(a), F.S., regarding transient rentals tax to add vessels to the taxable list of entities renting for under six months. Currently, a number of online companies are now advertising vessels on their websites. One website has seventeen vessel rentals for rent under six months. These rentals range from \$59 to \$500 per night. This change will enable counties and municipalities to collect bed taxes consistent with other transient rentals.

Palm Beach County also **SUPPORTS** legislation that would require rental owners or operators to provide local government with contact information of a responsible party for each rental, or provide a public record exemption that would enable local governments to identify the location of each rental.

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX

In 2018, the use of the Tourist Development Tax (TDT) was expanded to include any related land acquisition, land improvement, design, and engineering costs required to bring public facilities into service. This includes major capital improvements that have a life expectancy of five or more years. In 2021, legislation proposing adding resilience projects to the list of permissible TDT tax uses was introduced but failed to pass. In 2023, legislation increasing the population threshold for counties authorized by law to reimburse themselves with TDT revenues for certain services was passed. This change authorizes six new counties to use TDT revenues in this way.

Palm Beach County **OPPOSES** further expansion of the Tourist Development Tax.

ARCADES

In 2013, the Florida Legislature passed a law clearly prohibiting adult arcades from operating slot machines or other games of chance and paying winners in cash and expensive prizes. State law also states “Arcade Amusement Centers” can only pay out non-cash prizes worth a minimum amount and are prohibited from operating games of chance, and makes it a misdemeanor to violate the statute (Sections 849.08 and 849.16, F.S.). Further, F.S. 849.16 defines illegal slot machines as machine-based games that contain “any element of chance or any other outcome unpredictable by the user.”

As arcades were closed by the Governor pursuant to COVID-19 Executive Orders, it became apparent that there was a proliferation of adult arcades that have set up shop to operate in Palm Beach County.

Arcade operators have long argued that the machines are legal under the state's "Chuck E. Cheese" law, which allows people to play games with an "application of skill" to get credits redeemable for non-cash prizes. However, local governments throughout Florida with no authority to regulate these businesses, have shut down arcades arguing that gambling equipment is a public nuisance and that they have put public safety at risk since robberies and fatal shootings have occurred at these businesses throughout the state.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation that increases the penalties for individuals that operate illegal adult arcade gaming operations.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND MOBILITY

IMPACT FEES

Palm Beach County **OPPOSES** any legislation that would adversely affect the county’s ability to collect voter-approved impact fees.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Growth management laws should take careful consideration of and protect the distinct home rule authority and land use controls of local governments. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** changes that:

- Strengthen the intergovernmental review process.
- Ensure that the development impacts occurring outside the approving jurisdiction are adequately mitigated.
- Eliminate unnecessary duplication and expenses.
- Support full funding of regional planning councils.

Palm Beach County **OPPOSES** legislation prohibiting or restricting the ability of a regional planning council to provide planning and technical service to its local governments. Palm Beach County additionally **SUPPORTS** efforts to strengthen intergovernmental coordination so land use decisions of one jurisdiction do not negatively affect another.

Current law requires “proportionate share” payments only for the first project to take a road segment from under capacity to an over capacity situation. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** amending state law to require any project affecting an over capacity road to contribute an amount equal to their impact/use of the capacity they are absorbing.

Additionally, Palm Beach County **OPPOSES** legislation that preempts the legislative and policymaking powers of counties used to regulate land use and implement local zoning controls and/or fire codes and **OPPOSES** additional conversions of independent special districts under Section 165.0615, F.S. Further, the County **OPPOSES** legislative efforts that mandate minimum land use densities for properties that meet specific size, use and location characteristics.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (FDOT) GRANT PROGRAMS

Palm Beach County is qualified for, and has been the recipient of, various FDOT grant programs. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** attempts to increase funding to FDOT grant programs including, but not limited to the following:

- Public Transit Service Development Program - This program provides initial funding to public transit projects with new or innovative techniques to improve system efficiencies, ridership or revenue. Palm Tran’s Go Glades on-demand service was created from funding through this program.
- Transit Corridor Program - This program is designed to relieve congestion and improve capacity within an identified transportation corridor by increasing the people carrying capacity of transportation systems using high-occupancy conveyances.
- Park and Ride Lot Program - This program provides for the purchase and/or lease of private land for the construction of park and ride lots, the promotion of these lots, and the monitoring of their use. Palm Tran has received funding from this program and would like to seek future opportunities to receive funding.
- Airport Development Grant Program - The County **SUPPORTS** state funding for airport development that is no less than which is proposed by FDOT in the tentative work plan for 2022-2023.

AIRPORT CONTRACTS

Pursuant to changes to Chapter 332, F.S, effective October 1, 2020, a governing body of a commercial service

airport may not approve purchases of contractual services in excess of the Category Five threshold amount of \$325,000 provided in Section 287.017, Florida Statutes, on a consent agenda.

In 2023, legislation was passed and signed into law that revised the threshold amount. New thresholds are set by an airport's FAA Hub Classification. Effective July 1, 2023, a governing body of a commercial service airport may not approve purchases of contractual services or commodities in excess of: \$500,000 for small hub airports, \$1 million for medium hub airports, and \$1.5 million for large hub airports.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation granting the ability to approve airport contracts on a consent agenda which includes a reasonable opportunity for public comment, as well as increasing purchasing threshold amounts.

NATURAL GAS FUEL REBATE PROGRAM

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the reinstatement of the Natural Gas Fuel Rebate Program. In 2016, \$6 million was awarded statewide. However, the Legislature has not funded the program since its expiration in 2020.

INDEXING LOCAL OPTION FUEL TAXES

In aligning the state and counties with the same indexing system, indexing local option fuel taxes would allow counties to strategically fund projects from revenue generated within their county, thus allowing for a more targeted control of maintenance, development and investment. It will provide a much needed revenue source to fund transportation capital projects especially since the local gas tax is not indexed and it has lost most of its purchasing power due to inflation and increasing costs of construction.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** indexing local option fuel taxes to annual adjustments of the Consumer Price Index.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

The Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners remains dedicated to the goal of an integrated regional transportation system and new, dedicated funding for the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA) will enable Palm Beach County to use existing funds to expand and enhance its transit needs.

SFRTA is committed, if successful in obtaining a dedicated funding source, to funding millions for projects identified by Palm Beach County's Transportation Planning Agency in its five-year plan for the Capital Improvements Projects within Palm Beach County and other identified plans in the region.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** a dedicated funding source of annual revenue that provides support to transit operations and capital costs going to the SFRTA.

Palm Beach County continues to **MONITOR** state funding and other opportunities for rail transportation available in Palm Beach County including the expansion of service on FEC, CSX rail lines, and US 27 corridor rail lines.

AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES/TECHNOLOGY ADVANCEMENTS

As the technology for self-driving cars grows and develops, Palm Beach County will **MONITOR** legislation related to autonomous vehicles.

INVESTMENTS IN HYBRID AND ELECTRICAL BUSES

Palm Tran continues to implement policies and strategies aimed at creating a more sustainable transit system. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** initiatives and cost-share programs that aid transit agencies seeking to expand their electric fleet and charging infrastructure.

Palm Tran **SUPPORTS** any legislation that increases funds deposited into the State Transportation Trust Fund (STTF), and Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund (TDTF) such as, but not limited to:

- Efforts to return money to the STTF that has been previously diverted.
- Opposition to any future measures that divert funding from the STTF for non-transportation purposes.
- Funding of the Innovative Service Development Grant through the TDTF.

Palm Tran **SUPPORTS** efforts to extend the Natural Gas Fuel Fleet Vehicle Rebate Program.

TRANSPORTATION NETWORK COMPANIES

Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) have continued to expand their service throughout the state and have introduced new consumers to the concept of ride sharing. The Florida Legislature passed laws in 2017 to help facilitate the expansion of their services in the state. In 2019, legislation expanded TNC service to non-emergency medical transportation (HB 411). Palm Beach County seeks to ensure that TNCs continue to complement public transit and **SUPPORTS** legislation that expands first mile-last mile transportation options for our residents. Palm Beach County will also **MONITOR** legislative efforts to reclassify TNC drivers from independent contractors to employees.

Palm Beach County **OPPOSES** any effort that would cap the fees charged by an airport to a transportation network company or vehicle for hire for picking up at the airport. Palm Beach County also **OPPOSES** efforts to restrict an airport from designating appropriate pick up and drop off locations or to require an airport to provide facilities for transportation network operations on airport property at no cost, including staging or parking locations on airport property.

5G INSTALLATION PREEMPTION

In an effort to protect property values, community standards, and safety, Palm Beach County **OPPOSES** any additional preemption that would prohibit local governments discretion in permitting the design, color, aesthetics or installation standards of small cell node equipment in the implementation of 5G antennae installation.

BROADBAND ACCESS

Once a rural access issue, the COVID pandemic has brought to light a statewide need for reliable and affordable high-speed internet access, which is essential for residents to be prosperous in business, successful in education and have access to telemedicine to improve health outcomes.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the Department of Economic Opportunity's Office of Broadband in the effort to achieve access to reliable and affordable high-speed internet access to every household and business throughout the state.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** changes to 350.81, F.S. that would ease the requirements to allow local governments to offer broadband service in underserved areas.

PUBLIC SAFETY

CERTIFICATES OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCE AND NECESSITY

Palm Beach County has a responsibility to promote the health, safety and welfare of its residents and visitors by providing for the regulation of life support services, promoting the development and maintenance of safe, healthy, efficient and service-oriented life support transport services. Palm Beach County's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Ordinance establishes standards for issuing Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity (COPCN) for basic and advanced life support services, which applies to the unincorporated and incorporated area of Palm Beach County.

Palm Beach County **OPPOSES** any legislative effort to preempt the County's ability to grant COPCNs to EMS providers within the county under Section 401.25, F.S.

REENTRY FOR RETURNING CITIZENS/OFFENDERS

Florida continues to house one of America's largest prison populations. More than 34,000 people return to their communities from prison each year with more than 1,200 of those coming to Palm Beach County. Palm

Beach County **SUPPORTS** efforts to restore rights to felons and to provide resources to ensure successful re-entry into the regular workforce.

During the 2023 Legislative Session, Palm Beach County’s RESTORE Re-entry program was appropriated \$500,000. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** continued funding of this program with a \$500,000 appropriation request, which connects returning citizens from our local Palm Beach County Jail, the Florida Department of Corrections, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons to necessary services.

REGULATION OF DRONES NEAR CRITICAL COUNTY FACILITIES

During the 2017 Legislative Session, HB 1027 enacted the “Unmanned Aircraft Systems Act” (Section 330.41, F.S.) that vested authority to regulate drones in the State and prohibited local governments from enacting ordinances that regulate drones. The new law also makes it unlawful for a person to operate a drone over or near a “critical infrastructure facility.” However, critical infrastructure facility was defined as electrical generation or transmission facilities, chemical storage facilities, mining facility, natural gas facility or pipeline, natural gas or propane terminal or storage facility, oil or gas pipeline, and wireless communications facilities. Many of the County’s critical facilities are not covered by this definition such as jails, law enforcement facilities, courthouses and other government buildings. The County is concerned that without a prohibition of drones over or in the proximity of critical county facilities, the possibility of escapes, terrorism, and breaches in confidentiality increase significantly; all of which affect public safety and could potentially compromise the judicial and policy setting process.

In 2023, the Legislature passed HB 645, which expanded the definition of a “critical infrastructure facility” to include several other locations including water and wastewater infrastructure. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** an amendment to the definition of “critical infrastructure facility” in Section 330.41 F.S. to include jails, law enforcement facilities, courthouses, and buildings designated as the County Seat.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PUBLIC RECORDS EXEMPTIONS

A. After-Action Reports

Emergency management agencies throughout Florida compile after-action reports and quality assurance activities to evaluate disaster response and to further improve or modify response plans based on assessment results. To conduct these quality assurance activities effectively, emergency management agencies rely on honest after-action reports from stakeholders. Exempting this information will ensure that response partners and stakeholders will openly and candidly report without fear of retribution. Pursuant to Sections 395.0193, 395.1055, and 395.4025, F.S., healthcare and trauma agencies quality assurance records are exempt following the same logic.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation to amend Sections 119.071(3) and 252.905, F.S. to provide for an exemption for emergency management after-action reports and quality assurance activities to evaluate disaster response and to further improve or modify the quality of disaster response.

B. Emergency Management Data

Emergency management agencies throughout Florida are using emerging technologies that enable a multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional coordinated response to disasters and to implement emergency response plans across multiple agencies in real-time. Technologies include the ability in real-time to prioritize critical needs, assign tasks and personnel, and allocate resources as required to implement emergency plans. Exempting this information minimizes the risk of security system plans becoming subject to disclosure and could compromise security systems and security plans during emergencies when limited resources are available.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation to amend Section 119.071(3), F.S., to provide for an exemption for emergency management database platforms, applications, programs, software and all data and records contained therein, utilized to coordinate, plan, report, respond and recover from local and statewide emergencies and disasters.

MARSY’S LAW AMENDMENT

To conduct active shooter and mass fatality incident response activities effectively, emergency management agencies rely on personal identifying information, as well as minimal healthcare data from first responders and healthcare providers. Currently, Sections 401.30 and 960.0011, F.S. (Marsy’s Law), prohibit the disclosure of this information to emergency management agencies. Allowing disclosure of personal identifying information, as well as minimal healthcare data from first responders and healthcare providers to emergency management agencies in times of disaster will facilitate more effective family reunification and operation of family assistance centers.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation to amend Sections 401.30, and s. 960.0011, F.S. (Marsy’s Law) to permit disclosure of personal identifying information and healthcare data from first responders and healthcare providers to emergency management agencies in times of disaster.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FUNDING

The Emergency Management Preparedness and Assistance Trust Fund (EMPA) was created within Ch. 252, F.S. Since the inception of the Trust Fund in 1993, it has remained at the same funding level despite a substantial increase in demands on county and municipal emergency management. The EMPA is administered under the oversight of the Executive Office of the Governor. An annual surcharge of \$2.00 per residential property insurance policy and \$4.00 per commercial property insurance policy is currently imposed. A recent Florida Legislative Committee on Intergovernmental Relations study suggests that changes in the insurance industry since the 1994 inception of the surcharge may be responsible for unintended “loopholes” in surcharge assessments. It is important to note that the fees or types of policies this surcharge affects have not been modified since the trust fund’s inception.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** an examination of methods to correct the deficiencies in surcharge collection and the application of the surcharge to the number of units or parcels included for coverage in a commercial

or residential insurance policy. Prior to 2003, proceeds from the EMPA trust fund were distributed based on a fixed allocation formula in the statute and authorized each year by the Legislature. Since then, the annual appropriation levels for base grants to county emergency management programs have equaled \$7.1 million, a historical level representing approximately 44% of the annual trust fund proceeds.

Palm Beach County:

- **SUPPORTS** maintaining this funding level as the minimum allocation for county base grants.
- **SUPPORTS** an increase in county base grants to reflect the increased demands on county emergency management programs.
- **OPPOSES** efforts to shift state funding of emergency management from counties to cities.
- **SUPPORTS** maintaining the EMPA program administered by the Florida Division of Emergency Management (DEM) consistent with the original statutory intent (i.e., Section 252.373, F.S.).

Palm Beach County also **SUPPORTS** efforts to increase the fee that the Florida Division of Emergency Management can charge to review Comprehensive Emergency Management Plans to better balance the costs incurred by the County for staff to conduct the reviews. Currently, DEM can charge \$31.25 per hour.

VICTIMS' SERVICES

According to the Department of Justice, only 310 out of every 1,000 sexual assaults are reported to police. That means about 2 out of 3 go unreported.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation that would support survivors of sexual assault:

- Per Section 960.28, F.S., payment for a victim's initial forensic physical examinations is available to a medical provider who performs an initial forensic physical examination. The provider may not bill a victim or the victim's parent or guardian if the victim is a minor, directly or indirectly for that examination. The Crime Victims' Services Office of the Department of Legal Affairs shall pay for medical expenses connected with an initial forensic physical examination of a victim of sexual battery as defined in Chapter 794 or a lewd or lascivious offense as defined in Chapter 800.

The County also **SUPPORTS** efforts of the Office of the Attorney General to enforce the statewide collection of court fines and fees in order to stabilize the Crimes Compensation Trust Fund so that the initial forensic examination is fully compensated pursuant to Section 960.28, F.S.

HEALTH CERTIFICATES

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** a modification to Section 828.29, F.S., to remove the health certificate exemption for non-profit animal rescue groups. Current situation allows these groups to saturate our local communities with dogs from all over the country and beyond. There is no assurance that these animals are free from disease or were medically healthy prior to beginning their journey to our local communities.

DANGEROUS DOGS

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** a modification to Section 767.12, F.S., to provide criminal consequences for people who conceal or lie about the whereabouts of a dog following a severe attack on a human or other domestic animal. Palm Beach County has had numerous examples of dogs inflicting severe injury; however, an owner can falsely claim the dog ran away in the moments prior to County staff arrival. There is no remedy in law for such situations.

ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL PUBLIC RECORDS EXEMPTION

Currently, personal information for those who adopt animals is public record; however, many public shelter animals come from criminal animal cruelty cases and the offender would like to retrieve their pet unlawfully. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** protecting the new adopter's personal information by exempting it from public record.

EXPANDING ACCESS TO VETERINARY TELEMEDICINE

In 2020, the Florida Dept. of Business and Professional Regulation issued an emergency order that suspended any laws and regulations that might interfere with veterinarians using telemedicine. Pet owners, seeing the benefits of rescinding this excessive regulation, supported the expansion of legal options for veterinarians to provide telemedicine during times of crisis and beyond. Making veterinary telemedicine illegal does a disservice to the animals, adds additional constraints on the poor and medically compromised owners that cannot get their pets to a clinic. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation authorizing licensed veterinarians to utilize audiovisual telemedicine to treat new and existing patients.

911 CALL PERSONNEL

MONITOR any legislation that would change the definition of first responders to include 911 call personnel.

LIFEGUARD CERTIFICATION AND TRAINING

Coastal/open water lifeguards are employed by local governments around the state to provide effective injury prevention and emergency medical/rescue services. In emergency circumstances, pre-hospital medical care at Florida's public bathing places is necessary. In an effort to ensure minimum standards for rescue and pre-hospital medical care with transport providers, Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation or regulatory action that would license and/or certify coastal/open water lifeguard agencies under the United States Lifesaving Association - Agency Certification program.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence occurs in all races and ethnic groups, across all economic classes and educational levels. Nearly all victims are female (94%), and 31% of the women murdered in the United States are killed by their significant others. Forty percent of homeless families in large cities are homeless because they are fleeing violence. Children whose mothers are abused are at a higher risk of also being abused. Furthermore, substance abuse is more likely to compound the risk of domestic violence. Locally, recent news reports of domestic violence victims dying at the hands of their abusers have raised the need to support further efforts to protect victims, treat abusers, and provide resources for families.

Therefore, Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS**:

Legislation that allows for a victim of domestic violence to terminate rental leases if the victim can prove that the discontinued employment or need to terminate a lease is a direct result of circumstances related to domestic violence as defined in Section 741.28, F.S. The victim must:

- a. Provide evidence, such as an injunction, protective order, or other such reasonable documentation authorized by state law, which reasonably proves that domestic violence has occurred.
- b. Reasonably believe that a future act of domestic violence, including being a victim of stalking as provided in Sections 784.048(3), (4), or (5), F.S. is likely to occur against the individual by a family or household member, as defined in Section 741.28, F.S.
- c. Make reasonable efforts to preserve lease by seeking a protective injunction prior to seeking a lease.
- d. Attempt to relocate if a victim successfully terminates a lease under the guidelines above.

Palm Beach County also **SUPPORTS** the expansion of allowable uses of the Domestic Violence Trust Fund articulated in Section 938.08, F.S., to include programming for domestic violence victims. Some of the programs suggested are an in-house batterer's intervention program and support services for victims to help with obtaining restraining orders and case management assistance, as well as funding for prevention, housing and treatment. Currently, these funds generated by fees are only used for law enforcement training for domestic violence issues and to offset the costs of incarceration of domestic violence offenders.

BATTERERS' INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

In 2012, the Florida Legislature eliminated formal certification of Batterers' Intervention Programs (BIP) statewide which were, at that time, overseen by the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF). The amendment left the "identification" of these programs to counties. Certification under DCF entailed a

treatment and administrative review of providers. Every county in Florida is now struggling with how to “identify” providers, therefore:

Palm Beach County **RECOMMENDS** that The Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) evaluate the usage and effectiveness of BIPs across the State to determine whether the current 29-week psychoeducational model is being consistently ordered as envisioned and whether the curriculum is achieving the intended result of reducing repeat incidents of domestic violence.

Palm Beach County additionally **SUPPORTS** amending and revising Section 741.325, F.S., to:

- Require BIP providers to submit program and participant data including, but not limited to, number of participants, client outcome status, fees imposed and collected, sliding fee scales, program curriculum, demographic information, and similar reporting and data metrics for the purpose of evaluating program efficiency and compliance.
- Amend BIP requirements to include minimum provider training and education, reduced program duration, acceptable program content to include alternative program models, and data collection and reporting requirements.
- Authorize each local jurisdiction to utilize alternative BIP models for the community in cooperation with the local participants in the justice system, as well as social service agencies at the community level. These alternative programs may include programming for children of domestic violence victims or perpetrators.

CENTER FOR YOUTHFUL OFFENDERS

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** urging the Florida Department of Corrections to open a Youthful Offender Facility in South Florida. A Youthful Offender Center can be created within an existing structure here in South Florida. Such facilities house inmates up to 24 years of age whose crimes were committed before they turned 21 and whose sentences are ten years or less. A vital component to the rehabilitation of youthful offenders is being close to their families. However, the closest facility to Palm Beach County is in Sumter County. In 2012, a facility in Indian River County was closed down by the Department of Corrections due to budget cuts.

JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER

The Palm Beach County Juvenile Assessment Center (JAC) and Detention Center opened in November 1998 with the goal of providing a 24/7 one-stop intake and assessment center for youthful offenders’ initial entry into the juvenile justice system for the purposes of comprehensive case planning. By statute, JACs are a local option spearheaded by the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) in partnership with law enforcement and other community criminal justice entities. In Palm Beach County, this includes the State Attorney, School District Police, Palm Beach Sheriff’s Office and other local service providers. The facility has fallen into disrepair over the years and is in dire need of refurbishment and major repair.

In 2023, the DJJ received state funding for pre-construction architectural and engineering services necessary to begin replacing three existing juvenile detention centers located in Hillsborough, Broward and Palm Beach. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** continued funding for the replacement of the Palm Beach County Juvenile Justice Assessment and Detention Center, as well as funding for additional diversion programs.

DEPENDENCY CHILDREN AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

Judges have seen that if a child is a crossover youth and goes into Dept. of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) commitment or is in DJJ commitment when they turn 18, they no longer are eligible for aging out benefits as DCF views them a DJJ responsibility even though they have no parents taking care of them. As such, they would not qualify for benefits of Extended Foster Care such as housing assistance, upon their release from the DJJ program.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** adding language to Section 39.6251, F.S. to provide that commitment in a DJJ program on their 18th birthday would satisfy requirements as a “qualifying activity” and as residing in a “supervised living environment” when determining eligibility for Extended Foster Care.

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES GLADES REGION FACILITY

The Department of Children and Families Glades building was constructed over twenty years ago. Because this facility receives a lot of foot traffic, it is important to keep up the maintenance of the building. The General Services Director determined that the building is in need of structural improvements, attention to handicap bathrooms, pest removal, etc.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** funding to help with maintenance and repair of the Glades Region Department of Children and Families facility.

MARCHMAN ACT REVISIONS

The Marchman Act is a civil process established in Chapter 397, F.S. that provides for the involuntary or voluntary assessment, stabilization, and treatment of a person abusing or addicted to drugs or alcohol.

The Marchman Act involves a two-step process of assessment and then treatment. The most common way Marchman cases are initiated is with the filing of a petition for involuntary assessment in the county where the substance abuser is located. The criteria for the Marchman Act petition requires a demonstration that the individual has lost the power of self-control with respect to substance use and either (a) the individual is in need of substance abuse services and is incapable of making a rational decision in regard to receiving services or (b) is likely to suffer from neglect or has inflicted or threatened or attempted to inflict physical harm on oneself or another, or is likely to do so unless admitted.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the amendment of the Marchman Act to:

- Clarify the definitions of access center, designated receiving facility, and triage center to define functionality and the ability to receive and hold involuntary patients.
- Provide flexibility for courts to retain jurisdiction over an individual who fails to complete involuntary treatment or relapses within 12 months, and to order individuals to be transferred to licensed recovery residences upon completion of treatment if recommended by a service provider and if additional funding is available.
- Provide for circumstances under which an individual may be held in protective custody to allow for additional petitions to be filed in state court, and to allow minors to be held in treatment facilities until a petition for involuntary treatment is heard in court.

Palm Beach County additionally **SUPPORTS** increased and appropriate funding for crisis mental health and substance abuse beds statewide. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** increased funding for public receiving facilities and maintaining funding for public facilities if new state general revenue is provided to private receiving facilities. Palm Beach County also **SUPPORTS** coordinated efforts to increase access to acute care behavioral health services for individuals and families.

PRE-TRIAL RELEASE

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** maintaining county ability to provide non-monetary pre-trial release services that ensure the safety and welfare of local communities and **OPPOSES** legislation that would limit the discretion of first appearance judges to prescribe pre-trial options for defendants.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the expansion of state resources to assist treatment-based drug court programs. Eligible drug-addicted persons may be sent to Drug Court in lieu of traditional justice system case processing. Drug Courts keep individuals in treatment long enough for it to work, while supervising them closely.

BRITTANY’S LAW - DRIVER SAFETY FOR MINORS

In April 2015, a 17-year-old was accused of running a stop sign and killing 18-year old Palm Beach County resident Brittany Baxter. At the time, the 17-year-old had been charged with eight traffic citations in the 33 months he was authorized to drive.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation that would create enhanced driver safety by either increasing points assigned for repeat driving infractions incurred by drivers under the age of 18 and/or adjusting the state’s graduated driver license program to restrict driver privileges for repeat offenders.

DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE AND OFFICER TRAINING

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** amending Section 316.193, adding and defining the term, “impairing

substance” as a substance when taken into the human body, can impair, or diminish in some material respect, a person’s normal faculties. That section will define alcoholic beverages, any chemical substance under F.S. 893 and add the phrase “any other impairing substance, or any combination thereof” as a description of someone driving under the influence. Sponsoring this legislation for the 2023 session were Sen. Lori Berman (SB 448) and Rep. Joe Casello (HB 549).

In addition, Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** marijuana impaired driving detection training for law enforcement. The course will provide the line officer with specialized training on recognizing modern forms of cannabis, as well as detecting the unique impairment clues that are presented by cannabis users. At the conclusion of training, line officers will be better prepared to detect drivers that are impaired by cannabis usage and how to investigate, document, and prepare effective cases for prosecution.

FIRE RESCUE

CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS

Several times a year, the Palm Beach County Fire Rescue handles fatalities that have occurred because running car engines in garages have emitted toxic levels of carbon dioxide. If more homes were constructed with carbon monoxide detectors, these incidents could be eliminated. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** education to encourage the installment of detectors in garages of new construction homes.

MOBILE INTEGRATED HEALTH

Mobile integrated Healthcare (MIH) is an overarching term that captures the concept of a new type of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) delivery system. In most cases, MIH is a more cost-effective and more efficient method of providing appropriate care to the ever-growing population of 911 callers who have a medical issue that needs attention but does not constitute an emergency, as well as callers who do not need a quick emergency response. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** change in statute to allow for MIH-Community Paramedicine to bill insurance for non-emergency transport and care.

FIRE CODE ENFORCEMENT

Palm Beach County **OPPOSES** any effort by state government to infringe upon home rule authority by attempting to mandate change to Palm Beach County’s established Fire Code and Enforcement practices.

CONSUMER SERVICES

TOWING

Palm Beach County **OPPOSES** any changes to Florida Statute to that would preempt any current additional consumer protections provided by Palm Beach County.

VEHICLES FOR HIRE

The Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners passed a vehicle for hire ordinance as a way to extend essential safety and consumer protections to the riding public. The ordinance addresses for-hire rides provided by non-emergency medical transportation, limousines, taxi, non-taxi, and sedan service. Core components of the ordinance include minimum levels of commercial insurance, vehicle mechanical and safety standards, as well as criminal and driver history screenings for operators. Palm Beach County **OPPOSES** legislation that would allow vehicles for hire to operate within the county without being subject to the safety and consumer protections included in our ordinance.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT/ADMINISTRATIVE

VALUE ADJUSTMENT BOARD

The Palm Beach County Value Adjustment Board received a record 19,800 petitions in 2009 from residents who pay a \$15 filing fee in comparison to the approximate \$114 in costs to the County to facilitate a petition. In 2015, while the number of petitions filed has decreased significantly, the cost ratio to conduct the hearings has remained consistent. The current filing fee has been in effect since 1988. With the changes in law coupled with the vast number of petitions filed and expected to grow, Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** raising the filing fee to \$50 to cover the anticipated increasing costs to process them.

PUBLIC RECORDS EXEMPTION FOR SOLICITATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

In recent years, there have been a growing number of public records requests of county government from individuals and companies looking for employee contact information for the purpose of solicitation of goods and services. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** a request to exempt government employee contact information in situations where it is being requested for the blanket solicitation of goods and services.

PUBLIC RECORDS EXEMPTION FOR COUNTY ATTORNEYS & COUNTY ADMINISTRATORS

For several years, legislation has been filed to create an exemption from public records requirements for

personal identifying and location information of current and former county attorneys, assistant county attorneys, and county administrators. Because county attorneys and county administrators both review a full range of procedures, documents and services, Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** a public records exemption for county attorneys, assistant county attorneys and county administrators.

PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS ABUSE

The public records laws in Florida have granted the people rights without responsibility. People can, and do, misuse these laws, seemingly immune from consequences. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** state public records laws that maintain a meaningful public right of access while reducing the potential for mischief and misuse that are relevant to the realities of modern communication.

SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY – THRESHOLD CHANGES

There have been several attempts in recent years to revise sovereign immunity thresholds for local governments. Palm Beach County **OPPOSES** bills which would remove or drastically increase sovereign immunity thresholds for local governments.

SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY – RECREATION

As the State of Florida continues to experience dramatic growth in population, so does the demand for recreational facilities to serve the populace. One recurring issue has been the reluctance of public agencies to allow or permit recreational activities on their property due to an unacceptable level of tort exposure.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** an amendment to Section 768.28, F.S. to provide sovereign immunity for any public property intended or permitted to be used for recreational purposes.

BUILDING CODES

Following the devastating event that took place on June 24, 2021 at Champlain Towers located in Surfside, Florida, Palm Beach County has undertaken a series of meetings with local building officials and stakeholders regarding developing and implementing a program to evaluate the safety of certain multi-family building types in Palm Beach County. Palm Beach County believes the issue of building safety transcends beyond the boundaries of the county and the legislature should seek to provide comprehensive and uniform requirements requiring periodic inspections for such facilities. Palm Beach County will **MONITOR** any legislation requiring additional inspection requirements for multi-family condominium facilities in Florida or efforts to delay implementation of inspections or sprinkler requirements. The County will also **MONITOR** any legislation addressing the required financial responsibilities of condominium and community associations.

PROPERTY INSURANCE

In 2022, a Special Session was called with the purpose of addressing the property insurance crisis in Florida, legislators codified several changes to Florida's property insurance laws. Some of these changes included:

- The creation of the Florida Optional Reinsurance Assistance program (FORA), which allows insurance companies to purchase reinsurance at "reasonable" rates.
- Reducing the amount of time that policyholders have to file a new or reopened claim from two years to one year and from three years to eighteen months for a supplemental claim.
- Allowing the Office of Insurance Regulation (OIR) to issue fines, suspend or revoke an insurer's certificate of authority if the insurance company engages in unfair trade practices with regard to appraisals.
- Shortening the time insurance companies have to pay or deny claims from 90 to 60 days.
- Tightening the timeline that insurers must review and acknowledge claim communication and begin investigations.
- Eliminating one-way attorney's fees.
- Prohibiting the assignment of benefits of any post-loss insurance benefit under any residential or commercial property insurance policy issued beginning January 1, 2023.
- Increasing the eligibility requirements for those renewing coverage through Citizens Property Insurance Corporation to encourage Citizens customers to purchase from a private insurer.

Floridians have been experiencing substantial increases in their property insurance rates over the last several years, contributing to the skyrocketing cost of housing seen throughout the state. Palm Beach County will **SUPPORT** legislative proposals that would provide more predictability in the market and work to address the increased costs of property insurance for homeowners.

PROPERTY ASSESSED CLEAN ENERGY

The Property Assessed Clean Energy Program (PACE), is a financing program where residents pay for energy improvements to their homes through their property tax bill. The types of projects that can be financed are wind mitigation, new roofs or air conditioners and energy efficiency or renewable energy projects like solar panel installation.

To pay for the improvement, an assessment is attached to the property over a term and the homeowner pays for it, including interest, on their annual property tax bill over a period of years. According to a Tax Collector study, the average duration for an assessment on a new air conditioner is 15 years, a period of time that may likely exceed the typical lifespan of such equipment. The nature of this assessment can also make it difficult to sell or refinance the home and if a homeowner is unable to pay, it could mean the property is put in foreclosure.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** clarifying the terms and conditions of PACE agreements, ensuring that participants taking advantage of the program are fully informed of the financial responsibilities.

Palm Beach County also **SUPPORTS** language to further clarify and ensure local governments' right to require additional consumer protections of PACE agreements in their jurisdiction.

EDUCATION

STATE LIBRARIES

Local governments receive state support for libraries through three different programs: the State Aid Program, the Regional Multi-type Library Cooperative Grant program, and the Public Library Construction Grant Program. Continuation of these funding sources will ensure that the State will play an appropriate role in enhancing public library service by matching local library expenditures, enhancing consortia services to area libraries, and providing needed dollars for the construction of new public libraries

The Legislature funded State Aid to Public Libraries at \$17.5 million. Funding for Library Construction Grants was increased to \$9.8 million and Library Cooperatives totaled \$2 million. Palm Beach County strongly **SUPPORTS** the State aid to Public Libraries program be sustained at \$17.5 million in recurring funds, in conjunction with \$6 million in non-recurring funding (F.S. 257.17).

Approximately 51 percent of Floridians have a library card, visiting our libraries 75.1 million times in person and virtually visiting library websites 97.3 times. A strong fiscal foundation for our public libraries is critical to the state's economic and educational success.

Florida's State Aid Grant Program has been the cornerstone of public library support in our state since 1963 and is a national model. State Aid grant funding assists Floridians with:

- Economic development resources to small businesses and job seekers.
- Access to government services, especially e-government – public libraries are the “go to” place when Floridians need to access the Internet and the vast array of services and products online.
- Education and reading – libraries are the safety net that ensures school success for students of all ages.

For every \$1.00 invested in public libraries, the return on investment is \$10.18, Gross Regional Product increases by \$13.23, and income increases by \$28.42. For every \$2,574 spent on public libraries from public funding sources in Florida, one job (in the economy, not just in libraries) is created.

Library Technology Grants

For some citizens, Public Libraries are the only way to access a computer for things like school, work, and employment searches. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the restoration of Library Technology Grants that enable libraries to improve the technology services they can offer to citizens statewide.

New Public Library Construction Grants

The addition of new libraries would assist even more residents with getting access to the invaluable services provided by our library systems. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** full funding to support all eligible applications for grant funding.

Regional Multi-type Library Cooperatives

The Palm Beach County Library System is part of the regional multi-type library consortia known as the Southeast Florida Library Information Network (SEFLIN), which connects both public and private libraries of all types to one another and allows the community to be served more effectively through the joint use of technology, continuing education and training of library staff. In FY23 funding for the Cooperatives was \$2 million. Each grantee is awarded up to \$400,000 but it requires a ten percent cash match of local funds. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** an appropriation of at least \$2 million for Library Cooperatives. These funds are critical for Florida's five multi-type library cooperatives (MLC's). These funds are used to:

- Promote resource sharing so Floridians can easily obtain resources from other libraries using statewide delivery and reciprocal borrowing services.
- Continuously upgrade the skills of library employees to improve the experience of Florida library customers.
- Create connections between libraries to encourage adoption of technologies and services important to Floridians.

SMART HORIZONS CAREER ONLINE SCHOOL

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** funding for this program that allows 19-and-older out of school adults to complete a private high school diploma and career certificate through 35 participating library systems at \$750,000. No money was appropriated by the Legislature this past year. This program makes a high school diploma more accessible to Floridians and prepares them for success in the workforce.

EARLY LEARNING COALITION

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** efforts to increase hours for children entering the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program, based on assessment, would benefit from increased instructional hours to strengthen kindergarten readiness. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** maintaining School Readiness (SR) providers' ability to receive payment differential based on the results of observational assessment and implementation of approved child assessment.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Palm Beach County realizes that the physical health of students is as vital to learning and growth as mental health, and **SUPPORTS** efforts to emphasize physical health and fitness programming in our schools.

PALM BEACH COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the legislative agenda put forward by the School District of Palm Beach County covering different focus areas:

School Safety and Security: Fully fund student security requirements without the need for the local community funding. Increase the Safe Schools categorical allocation to reduce the cost gap associated with funding one Safe School officer for school.

Students: Increase the investment in mental health services by allocating funding for training for personnel providing mental health services in schools. Seek flexibility in the implementation of HB 733 (2023) to mitigate the potential challenges of start/stop times for students.

Teachers/Staff: Increase funding for expansion of district programs dedicated to developing future teachers and other high needs staff in collaboration with local universities, colleges, and technical centers.

Finance: Provide an increase in Base Student Allocation (BSA) commensurate with unprecedented inflation and cost of living increases to meet the rising costs of operations. Address compression issues impacting teacher salaries for mid-career teachers in light of restrictions found in F.S 1012.22 and expand flexibility within the State budget teacher salary allocation. Hold districts harmless for voucher enrollment growth beyond legislative projections.

Accountability and Assessment: Ensure alternative options continue to be made available for the new progress monitoring assessments using portfolios, concordant scores, etc. to assist students to succeed.

Pre-kindergarten/After Care: Fund full-day, high quality Voluntary Pre-K program.

Palm Beach County also **SUPPORTS** the School District of Palm Beach County's efforts to establish an African American History at the historic Roosevelt High School in West Palm Beach.

PALM BEACH STATE COLLEGE

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) funding for the remodel of the Student Library and Media Technology Center at Palm Beach State College's Lake Worth Campus. The Library is over 57 years old and has not had any major remodeling since the original construction.

With the rising demand for autonomous/electric vehicles, the automotive industry requires technicians with specialized training. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the PBSC's Transportation Technology Expansion Project to convert unused space in their existing lab into a four-bay unit with modern equipment to educate and train the next generation of automotive technicians.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** additional funding for Palm Beach State College to construct a nationally recognized Emergency Response Training Center, which will prepare local, state, and federal emergency response professionals to respond to all kinds of disasters locally and across the country.

FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** FAU's request for operational and PECO (capital) funding for its proposed College of Dentistry, which will be the second publicly funded dental college in Florida and will seek to address the critical shortage of dental professionals that exists throughout the state. The University will seek funding to continue the next phase of the College of Dentistry's construction and operational planning.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the FAU Health initiative, which brings premier academic medicine to southeast Florida, driving our community forward and improving the lives of our citizens. Specifically, FAU will focus on expanding enrollment in the College of Medicine from 259 medical students to 416 over the next 18 years, doubling the new doctors in Florida communities starting in 2029.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** Florida Atlantic University as it pursues its goal to be a Top 100 (U.S. News and World Report) Public Research University. The University is seeking resources to assist in sustaining excellence and accelerate its progress along the journey to being a Top 100 institution.

CAREER EDUCATION FUNDING

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) curricula has been predominantly taught in colleges or post-secondary institutions in Florida. Based upon the need for qualified candidates within the STEM fields, Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** efforts to expand, enhance and provide adequate funding of STEM programs to public career academies, K-12 educational programs, and career programs in higher education.

Palm Beach County also **SUPPORTS** funding efforts to expand and enhance vocational training programs.

CULTURAL ARTS AND HISTORIC GRANTS FUNDING

The Florida Division of Cultural Affairs (DCA) at the Department of State recommends to the Legislature a ranked list of qualified grant applicants for Cultural and Museum Grants, Cultural Projects, Cultural Facilities, and the Cultural Endowment Program. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** full funding of the Cultural Grant application list as approved by the DCA.

GLADES CAREER READINESS ROUNDTABLE

SUPPORT the continuation of the adult Commercial Vehicle Driving Program Testing Center. Palm Beach County also **SUPPORTS** the expansion of various programs under the Medical Sciences Department at West Technical Education Center, as well as funding for the refurbishment of the facilities necessary to support these programs.

AGRICULTURE

FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Integrated Farm to School programs have the ability to positively affect entire communities. One of the most valuable components of supporting Farm to School initiatives is the opportunity to increase access to fresh produce within a domestic food assistance program that services low-income families. Farm to School

programs encourage a lifelong appreciation for healthy eating habits by creating an environment that exposes children to a variety of fruits and vegetables. Aside from the nutritional benefits of increasing the availability of fresh produce in school meals, the local economy benefits from an additional marketplace and could indirectly promote job creation in the agricultural community.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation that would assist in integrating locally grown produce into school meals.

HUNGER RELIEF PLAN

Hunger can and does exist in the midst of plenty. Nationally, more than 49 million Americans have trouble regularly putting nutritious food on the table. Despite its wealth, more than 200,000 residents in Palm Beach County struggle with hunger. People can't always feed themselves and their families because they have too little money, too little access both to federal nutrition programs and to sources of affordable healthy food, and too little information about how their challenges can be overcome. For over a decade, Palm Beach County partners increased the availability of fresh produce that would otherwise go to waste through gleaning events. Gleaning occurs from November through July, weather permitting. Support continued efforts to allow for gleaning activities.

According to Feeding America, 20 billion pounds of fruits and vegetables are discarded on farms or plowed under. The USDA has estimated that 35 million pounds of food are needed annually to feed the hungry in Palm Beach County. Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation and funding to help support the Palm Beach County Hunger Relief Plan, local non-profits and local farmers.

APPROPRIATION REQUESTS

PALM BEACH COUNTY

Art & Recreation Programs for Seniors with Alzheimer's and Dementia		\$500,000
Balanced Community Justice Project		\$367,420
Central Palm Beach County Historic Infrastructure Improvements		\$1,000,000
CR 880 Road Repair Phase I		\$25,000,000
Fire Rescue Emergency Response Vessels		\$385,000
Fresh Food Delivery Pilot Program for At-Risk Seniors		\$1,000,000
Green Cay Phase II		\$3,000,000
Palm Beach Lakes Blvd Bridge Project		\$2,000,000
Peanut Island Historic Restoration		\$2,000,000
RESTORE Re-Entry Program		\$500,000
Transportation Disadvantaged Discounted Bus Passes		\$2,000,000
West Delray Regional Park Boundless Playground		\$1,500,000
Westgate CRA - Enhanced Lighting and Safety Initiative		\$750,000

LAKE WORTH LAGOON INITIATIVE

Lake Worth Lagoon System Assessment	Palm Beach County ERM	\$145,000
Marine Debris Removal	Palm Beach County ERM	\$220,000
Seagrass Restoration Project Phase II	Palm Beach County ERM	\$541,000

LOXAHATCHEE RIVER PRESERVATION INITIATIVE

Daniels Way Water Quality Improvements	Town of Jupiter	\$94,543
Eastern Flow Way of Kitching Creek	Martin County	\$500,000
Loxahatchee Slough Habitat Restoration Phase II	Palm Beach County ERM	\$180,000

SUPPORT

Field for Dreams – West Jupiter Community Group
Indian Trail Improvement District M-0 Outfall & M-1 Impoundment
Palm Springs South Congress Avenue Sewer Force Main
South Florida Fairgrounds Emergency Shelter