

PALM BEACH COUNTY

2026

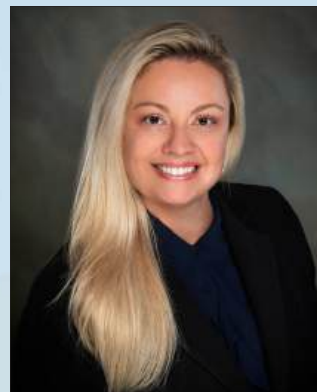
STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



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STATEMENTS OF AFFILIATION

FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

As a member of the Florida Association of Counties (FAC), Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the 2026 FAC Legislative Program and Guiding Principles, unless issues specifically conflict with a Palm Beach County position.

COUNTY COALITION FOR RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT OF LAKE OKEECHOBEE

As a member, Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the 2026 State Legislative Priorities of the 16 County Coalition for Responsible Management of Lake Okeechobee, unless issues specifically conflict with a Palm Beach County position.

SOUTHEAST FLORIDA REGIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE COMPACT

As a member, Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the 2025 State Legislative Priorities of the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact, unless issues specifically conflict with a Palm Beach County position.

HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

LIVE LOCAL ACT

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** state incentives for local governments that have implemented a dedicated funding source for affordable and workforce housing development. Palm Beach County also **SUPPORTS** allowing local governments to determine if affordable housing is appropriate on certain industrial zoned properties.

Background: Florida has experienced decades of rapid population growth, with South Florida—and Palm Beach County in particular—emerging as one of the fastest-growing destinations for new residents. This steady influx has strained the housing market, driving up rents and depleting the supply of available units.

In 2023, the Legislature passed the Live Local Act, making a historic state investment in affordable housing programs. The law also preempted local governments' authority over zoning, density, and

height requirements to streamline the development of affordable multifamily housing in commercial, industrial, and mixed-use areas. While well-intentioned, the legislation does not account for the fact that some industrial lands are unsuitable for residential use due to noise and other impacts, or that counties may have limited industrial acreage available for future economic development.

At the same time, many local governments have taken initiative by issuing bonds or dedicating other local funding sources to expand affordable housing. In these cases, where communities have “skin in the game,” their efforts should be recognized and supported with additional incentives to strengthen and complement state investments.

MID-LEASE RENT INCREASES ON TAXPAYER FUNDED UNITS

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation that would restrict rent increases based on these program limits to only take effect at the time of lease renewal, ensuring more predictability for tenants.

Background: Program Income and Rent Limits for affordable housing units are updated annually, which can sometimes result in mid-lease rent increases for tenants living in multifamily units funded by state and federal agencies. This situation can lead to unexpected rent hikes that tenants hadn’t prepared for, impacting them midway through their lease or in some cases only weeks after signing the original agreement. These unexpected rent increases can price out individuals and families who are already on fixed or limited incomes, causing these residents to become unhoused unless this practice is prohibited.

EVICITION FILINGS

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislative efforts that would allow a tenant to request a court seal an eviction filing when a settlement is reached and the eviction is no longer pursued to remove this barrier to housing access.

Background: Many times, during the eviction process parties involved can reach a settlement agreement through mediation and the tenant’s eviction is no longer pursued. However, even when a settlement is reached and an eviction is not finalized, the eviction filing remains accessible to future landlords through public records and tenant screening databases, despite not showing up on credit reports. This creates a barrier to housing for individuals who have never actually been evicted, as the mere existence of an eviction filing can negatively impact their ability to secure future housing.

OPPORTUNITY ZONES CENSUS TRACTS

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislative efforts for the permanent extension and redesignation of Opportunity Zones, along with the enhanced reporting and transparency measures. To ensure designations reflect true local needs, the County also **SUPPORTS** legislation that allows counties and municipalities to submit recommendations on which tracts should be selected as Opportunity Zones.

Background: The Opportunity Zone (OZ) program, created under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, provides tax incentives to encourage private investment in distressed communities. In 2018, Palm Beach County recommended 37 eligible tracts for designation, of which 11 were selected by Governor Rick Scott. Today, the County has 26 designated OZs, including those original 11 tracts.

Given their on-the-ground perspective, local governments can provide meaningful insight on housing, infrastructure, and economic development opportunities to help ensure OZ designations align with community needs. While federal law allows states to designate up to 25% of eligible low-income census tracts—effectively closer to 29% once contiguous tracts are factored in—the next redesignation process in 2026 provides an opportunity for local recommendations to guide the Governor’s selections and maximize the impact of OZ incentives.

PALM BEACH COUNTY ROAD 880

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** funding for the reconstruction of County Road 880, a critical farm-to-market link in the community, through the SCOP farm-to-market road program outlined in 339.2818(8), F.S., the County Incentive Grant Program as provided in 339.2817, F.S., direct appropriations, or other grant programs.

Background: Palm Beach County Road 880 (CR-880) is a two-lane road that constitutes approximately 18 miles stretching from the Twenty-Mile Bend into the City of Belle Glade. This roadway serves as the main mode of transport for the agricultural products yielded by the farms in the Glades region to get to distribution centers and the Port of Palm Beach, where they will eventually end up in the homes of consumers across the nation. When CR-880 was originally constructed by the State of Florida, it was built on top of the muck soil that is prevalent in the region. The instability of the muck soil beneath the road, coupled with the weight of the large trucks hauling these products out of the region year-round has accelerated the aging of this infrastructure. As a result, the roadway has fallen into a state of disrepair, necessitating its complete reconstruction. The total project cost is projected to total over \$100 million.

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**:

- Improvements to existing affordable housing units as well as the development of new affordable housing units in the region.
- Initiatives and funding to improve stormwater infrastructure.
- The continuation and enhancement of the Small County Outreach Program (SCOP) funding for road reconstruction and repaving.
- The continuation and enhancement of the Rural Jobs Tax Credit to support the growth of existing businesses and the creation of new businesses in the county's rural communities.
- 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.

Background: The Glades communities of Belle Glade, South Bay, and Pahokee, located along the southeastern edge of Lake Okeechobee, form the heart of Palm Beach County's agricultural region. Despite their importance to the state's food supply, these communities face persistent challenges that impact quality of life and long-term opportunity. Affordable housing remains limited, with many residents struggling to find safe, stable, and cost-accessible options. Infrastructure systems in the region are aging and require significant upgrades to meet current and future needs. At the same time, the local economy is heavily dependent on agriculture, leaving few pathways for economic diversification and growth. Unemployment and underemployment remain higher than in other parts of the county, underscoring the need for investments that expand business opportunities, job training, and small-business development.

JOB GROWTH GRANT FUND

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** continued funding for the Florida Job Growth Grant Fund 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.

FLORIDA'S FILM, TELEVISION, AND DIGITAL MEDIA

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the reinstatement of Florida's Entertainment Industry Sales Tax Exemption Program and other programs to retain Florida's professionals and new graduates in these industries. Palm Beach County also **SUPPORTS** the Film and Television Commission's education initiative, The Palm Beaches Student Showcase Films, Florida's largest student film competition and award show.

Background: 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 economy. Previously, Florida offered a variety of programs and incentives to boost these industries in the state and increase economic activity in this sector.

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 the Herbert Wertheim UF Scripps Institute for Biomedical Innovation and Technology.

Background: Biomedical research funding is beneficial to not only the residents of Palm Beach County, but to residents nationwide. Supporting these programs locally can help attract a variety of new businesses to the county and increase economic activity.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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

Background: 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.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

CHILD CARE LICENSING CAPACITY LOCAL BILL

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** amending Chapter 59-1698, Special Acts, Laws of Florida, to align local child care licensing standards with those of the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF), including increasing the allowable capacity for Family Day Care Homes.

Background: Under current law, Family Day Care Homes in Palm Beach County are limited to a maximum of six children, and Large Family Child Care Homes are limited to eight children from birth to 24 months or 12 children if no more than four are under 24 months. In contrast, DCF permits up to 10 children in Family Day Care Homes, depending on age, in the counties where they are the regulating entity for these homes. Aligning Palm Beach County's standards with DCF's requirements

would standardize the regulations with most other counties' requirements while ensuring childcare facilities remain safe, well-regulated, and supportive of thriving families.

TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED PROGRAMS

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

Background: 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 significant additional funding.

SUBSTANCE USE AND MENTAL HEALTH FUNDING

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, treat mental illness, increase efforts to prevent addiction, and create overall safer communities.

Palm Beach County also **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 **SUPPORTS** funding efforts by the legislature for trauma informed care training, 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.

Background: 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.

OPIOID AND SUBSTANCE USE POLICY

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** policy changes 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.

STATE ATTORNEY ADDICTION RECOVERY TASK FORCE

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the State Attorney Addiction Recovery Task Force and their recommended statutory changes for the 2026 Legislative Session.

Background: 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. 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 relapses 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. The Task Force has been instrumental in the passage of landmark legislation addressing the treatment industry in seven legislative sessions. 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 have been commonplace in the industry.

CHILD WELFARE

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

Background: The FCC is a statewide association of community-based care (CBC) lead agencies, which include ChildNet Palm Beach and those agencies that directly serve Florida’s abused, abandoned and neglected children. Annual increases in statewide child welfare funding have not been sufficient to meet the needs of this population. There has been a notable increase in the number of teens in group residential care facilities, which has been driving up the cost of care statewide. 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.

SENIOR WELFARE

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the Area Agency on Aging's legislative priorities, which includes funding to serve at-risk seniors on the Department of Elder Affairs waiting list for the Community Care for the Elderly Program, the Home Care for the Elderly Program, and the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program.

GUARDIANSHIP OVERSIGHT

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.

Background: 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.

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.

PUBLIC RECORDS EXEMPTION FOR AUTOPSY REPORTS

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation to amend Chapter 119 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.

Background: 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. Most cases in which Medical Examiner jurisdiction is assumed fall under the

non-exempted category. 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 are 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.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - PALM BEACH COUNTY BUILDINGS

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the Florida Department of Health's (DOH) agency request for funding to paint and waterproof one of the county's DOH facilities in need of these repairs.

The County also **SUPPORTS** a partnership with the State of Florida to assist in funding the new Department of Health Building at the South County Administrative Complex.

Background: Palm Beach County plans to undergo a comprehensive redevelopment of the South County Administrative Complex to include a new building for the Florida Department of Health (FDOH). During the design phase of this project, the County has worked closely with FDOH to ensure the new building will meet their needs and not interrupt day to day activities so they can continue to provide services to Palm Beach County residents.

MULTICULTURAL RESOURCES CENTER

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** state funding efforts to establish a Multicultural Resources Center to meet a critical need in our community.

Background: Palm Beach County is home to a large community of diverse people representing a variety of countries. To meet the needs of this growing population the creation of a Multicultural Resources Center has been approved by the Board of County Commissioners, who have allocated \$1 million for this purpose. Once realized, this location will serve as a hub for a multiplicity of services to a diversified community base.

BUDGET & TAXATION

AD VALOREM TAXATION

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.

Background: Restricting or eliminating local property taxes would undermine Florida’s long-standing principle of home rule by stripping local governments of their primary revenue source. Property taxes are the backbone of municipal and county budgets, funding critical public safety services such as police, fire rescue, and emergency response, along with other essential services residents rely on every day. Limiting this authority would not only erode local decision-making but also jeopardize a community’s ability to protect its residents and maintain the quality of life that makes Florida an attractive place to live.

UNFUNDED MANDATES

Palm Beach County **OPPOSES** new unfunded mandates and unfunded state to county cost shifts.

Background: 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.

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX

Palm Beach County **OPPOSES** any further expansion of the Tourist Development Tax (TDT) and **SUPPORTS** maintaining TDT revenue for local tourism promotion, which supports businesses in the community, beach renourishment efforts, the arts, sporting events, people employed in the visitor industry, and quality of place for everyone.

Background: The Tourist Development Tax was originally created to establish a dedicated, locally levied revenue stream to reinvest back into tourism-related infrastructure and marketing efforts to increase visitation and boost economic activity. Over time, however, the Legislature has steadily expanded its permissible uses. Each expansion chips away at the tax’s original intent, diluting the dollars available for tourism promotion. Tourism marketing is necessary because it directly drives the visitor economy, which in turn supports jobs, small businesses, as well as state and local tax revenues. Tourism promotion is also pivotal to compete with destinations across the world.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT, TRANSPORTATION, & INFRASTRUCTURE

IMPACT, MOBILITY, AND MULTI-MODAL FEES

Palm Beach County will **MONITOR** legislation regarding impact fees, mobility fees, and/or multi-modal fees. Palm Beach County continues to **OPPOSE** legislation that would adversely affect the county's ability to charge and collect such fees.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** efforts to strengthen intergovernmental coordination to ensure that the development impacts occurring outside the approving jurisdiction are adequately mitigated and unnecessary duplication of efforts or expenses are eliminated.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** changes to current law to restore local government's home rule authority to deny projects based upon the proposed project's projected impact to surrounding transportation infrastructure.

Palm Beach County **OPPOSES** legislation that preempts the legislative and policymaking powers of counties used to regulate land use and implement local zoning controls, fire codes, and density.

Further, the County **OPPOSES** legislative efforts that mandate minimum land use densities for properties that meet specific size, use and location characteristics.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation requiring a utility to reimburse a local government for reasonable damages resulting from the utility's failure to remove or relocate its utility lines in the local government's rights-of-way pursuant to an approved utility work schedule.

Palm Beach County also **SUPPORTS** efforts to allow local governments to make the issuance of permits for the new placement of utilities within the local government's rights-of-way contingent upon the payment of any costs incurred by the local government due to the failure of the utility owner to timely relocate utilities or for damaging existing infrastructure.

Background: Palm Beach County has faced significant challenges in delivering certain critical infrastructure projects on time and within budget due to issues involving utility coordination. In many cases, utilities have damaged existing infrastructure or failed to relocate their facilities in accordance with agreed-upon schedules. These delays have not only slowed progress on county projects but have also resulted in millions of dollars in added costs. When damage occurs, the County often struggles to secure reasonable and timely reimbursement for repair expenses or costs caused by project delays due to failure to relocate utilities as required. This lack of accountability undermines efficient project delivery, disrupts the community, and places an unfair financial burden on local taxpayers.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (FDOT) GRANT PROGRAMS

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** attempts to increase funding to FDOT grant programs including the Public Transit Service Development Program, Transit Corridor Program, Park and Ride Lot Program, and Airport Development Grant Program.

AIRPORT CONTRACTS

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.

Background: 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 more than 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 the airport's FAA Hub Classification. Now 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. These thresholds are still too low to reduce the administrative burden of bringing regular agenda items to the Board of County Commissioners for each contract. In the case of Palm Beach International Airport, an overwhelming majority of contracts necessary for daily operations are in excess of the medium hub threshold of \$1 million.

INDEXING LOCAL OPTION FUEL TAXES

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

Background: 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.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislative action to fund the Florida Rail Enterprise Program to fund South Florida Regional Transportation Authority's Tri-Rail operations to maintain Tri-Rail's level of service and urges the Florida Department of Transportation to include such funding in the appropriate current and future Five-Year Work Programs.

Background: Tri-Rail, operated by the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA), is facing major financial challenges following the passage of HB 7031, a \$1.3 billion tax package signed into law on June 30, 2025. The bill eliminates documentary stamp tax revenue distributions that previously funded the Florida Rail Enterprise program, a key source of state support for Tri-Rail. Despite record ridership of more than 4.5 million passengers in FY 2024–25, this change has created a \$30 million budget deficit and significant uncertainty for Tri-Rail’s long-term operations. Without a sustainable state funding mechanism, the burden shifts to local governments already under fiscal strain, threatening service stability, regional mobility, and increased traffic congestion on major highways.

AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES & TECHNOLOGY ENHANCEMENTS

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

INVESTMENTS IN EFFICIENT FLEETS

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** initiatives and cost-share programs that aid transit agencies in upgrading to the most efficient and cost-effective fleet technologies available.

TRANSPORTATION NETWORK COMPANIES

Palm Beach County seeks to ensure that transportation network companies (TNCs) continue to complement public transit and **SUPPORTS** legislation that expands first mile-last mile transportation options for our residents.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** action to ensure that TNCs operating at airports comply with all requirements for state licensure and that law enforcement or airport officials have the ability to verify such compliance when needed. 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.

BROADBAND ACCESS

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

Background: Once a rural access issue, a statewide need has been brought to light 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.

PUBLIC SAFETY & CONSUMER PROTECTION

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY LICENSING BOARD LOCAL BILL

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** amending Chapter 67-1876, Special Acts, Laws of Florida, to align Palm Beach County's licensing process with best practices in professional regulation, including requiring contractor applicants to successfully complete their examinations prior to CILB review.

Background: Under current law, contractor applicants in Palm Beach County must first submit their application for review by the Construction Industry Licensing Board (CILB) before taking the required examination. This process often results in duplicate reviews when applicants are unsuccessful, creating delays and additional administrative work. Requiring applicants to pass the examination prior to CILB review would streamline the process, reduce unnecessary burdens, and ensure only qualified candidates advance, aligning Palm Beach County's licensing system with best practices in professional regulation.

CERTIFICATES OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCE AND NECESSITY

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.

Background: 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.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PUBLIC RECORDS EXEMPTIONS

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.

Background: 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 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.

Background: Emergency management agencies throughout Florida are using emerging technologies that enable a multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional coordinated response to disasters and 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.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FUNDING

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** maintaining annual appropriation levels for base grants to county emergency management programs from the Emergency Management Preparedness and Assistance Trust Fund (EMPA) at \$7.1 million. Palm Beach County also **SUPPORTS** an increase in county base grants to reflect the increased demands on county emergency management programs and **OPPOSES** efforts to shift state funding of emergency management from counties to cities.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** funding opportunities for counties to update and harden their emergency operations centers.

Lastly, Palm Beach County **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.

Background: The Emergency Management Preparedness and Assistance Trust Fund (EMPA) was created within Ch. 252, F.S. The EMPA is administered under the oversight of the Executive Office of the Governor. 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. An annual surcharge of \$2.00 per residential property insurance policy and \$4.00 per commercial property insurance policy is currently imposed.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMERGENCY MANAGER CERTIFICATION & TRAINING

Palm Beach County will **MONITOR** any legislative or regulatory proposals that impose new certification, licensing, or training requirements on local government emergency management personnel.

NATURAL DISASTERS

Palm Beach County will **MONITOR** legislation concerning emergencies and natural disasters and **OPPOSE** measures that undermine local authority to manage response and recovery efforts in a manner tailored to the unique needs of our community.

REENTRY FOR RETURNING CITIZENS

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** youth re-entry programs to ensure successful re-entry of individuals into the regular workforce.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** continued and recurring funding of the RESTORE Re-entry program with a \$500,000 appropriation, a program that connects returning citizens from our local Palm Beach County Jail, the Florida Department of Corrections, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons to necessary services.

VICTIMS' SERVICES

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation that would support survivors of sexual assault. The County also **SUPPORTS** efforts of the Office of the Attorney General to enforce the statewide collection of court fines and fees to stabilize the Crimes Compensation Trust Fund so that the initial forensic examination is fully compensated pursuant to Section 960.28, F.S. The County also **SUPPORTS** increased funding for certified rape crisis centers so that survivors of sexual assault have free and confidential support services available: information about victims' rights, 24-hour crisis response, free forensic/rape exams with evidence collected by Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE), guidance and support through the criminal justice system, assistance with filing state crime victim compensation and injunctions for protection, trauma-informed individual therapy and support groups, as well as follow-up, information, and referrals to community resources.

LETHALITY ASSESSMENTS

Palm Beach County will **MONITOR** legislation that will modify aspects of the statutorily required lethality assessments, with a focus on improving coordination between law enforcement

administering the assessments and victim advocates who connect high-risk individuals with critical services.

Background: Florida only recently established statewide laws on lethality assessments in domestic violence cases. Before 2024, their use was inconsistent and not required by law. In 2024, a law was mandating that law enforcement officers conduct a standardized 12-question lethality assessment in intimate partner violence investigations beginning in 2026. This change created a uniform, statewide process that both ensures victims at high risk of serious harm are quickly identified and able to be provided with information about services and resources available to them.

PUBLIC RECORDS EXEMPTION FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT COUNSELORS

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** protecting the personal information, including phone numbers, of victim advocates by exempting it from public record to ensure their safety and safeguard their crucial role in supporting victims of crime in our communities.

Background: Currently, personal information for victim advocates is public record. These individuals often work closely with victims of sensitive and high-risk situations, potentially exposing these advocates to threats or harassment from offenders or other related parties.

DANGEROUS DOGS

Palm Beach County will **MONITOR** efforts to modify Florida's dangerous dog statutes.

ANIMAL 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.

Background: Currently non-profit animal rescue groups are allowed to saturate our local communities with animals from all over the country and beyond without securing a health certificate for the animals. Due to the existing health certificate exemption for these groups, there is no assurance that these animals are free from disease or were medically healthy prior to beginning their journey to our local communities, putting local animals and residents at risk.

RABIES VACCINATION OF DOGS, CATS, AND FERRETS

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation to amend Section 784.07, F.S., to expand the authority of persons vaccinating animals as an agent of a local government under the indirect supervision of a veterinarian to include owned animals not coming through the shelter system.

Background: This change will assist in controlling rabies in historically underserved communities where rabies vaccination levels are under the minimum coverage rate of 70% by offering vaccine clinics in actual communities. As these residents often have limited transportation, it is difficult to get their animals to local veterinary clinics.

ASSAULT OF ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICERS

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** a modification to Section 784.07, F.S., to provide enhanced protection for animal control officers.

Background: Animal control officers routinely perform high-risk duties that place them in direct contact with hostile individuals, unsafe properties, and dangerous animals. These officers are often tasked with enforcing laws and regulations that can provoke strong opposition, leaving them vulnerable to threats, harassment, and physical assaults. A modification to Section 784.07, F.S. is necessary to include animal control officers as “other specified personnel” making them eligible for enhanced protection under this statute. Extending these protections is essential to recognize the dangers inherent in their work, deter violence against them, and ensure they can carry out their responsibilities safely and effectively in service to the community.

MOBILE & MANUFACTURED HOME SAFETY

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislative efforts to strengthen enforcement of the Florida Building Code and Florida Fire Prevention Code in mobile and manufactured home communities to protect the health, safety, and welfare of residents. The County further **SUPPORTS** requiring mobile home park owners to take reasonable steps to ensure compliance within their communities, recognizing that adherence to these codes is essential to preventing unsafe living conditions and reducing risks to both residents and first responders.

911 FEE INCREASE

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** raising the 911 fee to accommodate increased expenses and expansion of technology to continue providing high quality service to citizens.

Background: The current 911 fee of \$0.40 per carrier line only partially supports the total cost, about 20%, to run each of the 16 public safety answering points (PSAPs) in Palm Beach County which handle over 1.2 million 911 calls per year and route them to the appropriate public safety responders. The 911 fee primarily covers the 911 infrastructure and equipment systems. The remaining 80% of the cost is covered by the PSAPs individually, primarily by municipalities, and is dependent on their local budget limitations which makes the financial stability of each of the PSAP's inconsistent and in great need of additional support via a 911 fee increase. Additionally, the equipment and technology used is rapidly to improve cybersecurity, decrease response times, and add new services such as video and text messaging. These changes require the systems to be replaced or updated frequently, increasing overall costs.

911 CALL PERSONNEL

Palm Beach County will **MONITOR** any legislation that would change the definition of first responders to include 911 call personnel.

TOWING

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

LICENSING OF OCCUPATIONS

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** efforts to restore local government's ability to license home care givers and adult entertainers in the interest of public safety.

Background: State preemption has restricted local governments from licensing certain occupations, including home caregivers and adult entertainers. For caregivers, local oversight ensures those entrusted with vulnerable populations meet standards for background checks, and accountability. However, a significant gap in oversight has emerged. The state only regulates home caregivers who work through licensed agencies, those who work independently or are privately hired are no longer regulated by the County due to the preemption. This leaves a vulnerable segment of the population without sufficient protections. Similarly, local licensing of adult entertainment has been an important tool to promote safety, prevent exploitation, and reduce trafficking. Restoring this authority would allow Palm Beach County to adopt safeguards tailored to the community and better protect residents.

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 also **SUPPORTS** legislation that would require rental owners or operators to provide local government with contact information of a responsible party for each rental.

Background: 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.

FIRE RESCUE

MUNICIPAL SERVICES TAXING DISTRICTS

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** amending 125.01, Florida Statutes, to allow municipal service taxing units whose primary purpose is to provide fire protection, rescue, and emergency medical services (“Fire MSTUs”) to avoid adverse financial impacts associated with annexations within its boundaries, while at the same time not restricting municipalities’ ability to annex.

Background: With the recent increase in property values, municipalities are beginning to annex tax-desirable properties. Historically, municipalities do not annex less desirable properties but rather properties that pay more taxes than the cost of services provided are targeted. Sometimes, these properties are located within Fire MSTUs. By annexing tax-desirable properties within a Fire MSTU, there is a shift of fire expenses onto remaining district residents. As a direct result of the annexation, a Fire MSTU may either need to levy a higher millage rate or decrease the level of services. As the Fire MSTU’s tax base continues to decrease due to annexations, the Fire MSTU may become economically inefficient.

URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM DESIGNATION

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the designation of Palm Beach County Fire Rescue as a Florida Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Team.

Background: This designation ensures that Palm Beach County remains part of the state’s highly trained, strategically located network of specialized response teams capable of rapid deployment to disasters across Florida and the nation. Palm Beach County Fire Rescue brings unique expertise in structural collapse, confined space, swift water, and wide-area search and rescue, providing vital capabilities that protect lives and property during natural disasters and other large-scale emergencies.

MOBILE INTEGRATED HEALTH

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** change in statute to allow for MIH-Community Paramedicine to bill insurance for non-emergency transport and care.

Background: 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.

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.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

PALM BEACH COUNTY JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER

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.

Background: 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.

DEPENDENCY CHILDREN AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** adding language to Section 39.6251, F.S. to provide that commitment in a Department of Juvenile Justice 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.

Background: If a child is a crossover youth and goes into Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) commitment or is in DJJ commitment when they turn 18, they no longer are eligible for aging out

benefits as the Department of Children and Families 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.

DRUG COURT PROGRAMS

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the expansion of state resources to assist treatment-based drug court programs.

Background: 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.

DRIVER SAFETY FOR MINORS – BRITTANY’S LAW

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.

Background: 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.

BLOOD TEST SCREENING FOR CERTAIN DISEASES THROUGH SIGNIFICANT EXPOSURE

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation that would revise Florida law to allow, statewide, the immediate blood test screening for certain diseases if law enforcement officers are significantly exposed to bodily fluids while on duty.

Background: Law enforcement officers are often exposed to hazardous materials and bodily fluids while on the job. At times, these officers can experience accidental, significant exposure to bodily fluids, which puts them at risk for contracting a variety of infectious diseases. To prevent an unnecessary delay in the early diagnosis and treatment of the exposed person, a Broward County Chief Judge signed an administrative order that allowed for the prompt blood testing and disclosure of the results of the individual who is the source of the fluids. The administrative order allows for screening of the source individual’s blood for certain diseases, if a physician deems it medically necessary, without the need for a court order if said person refuses to voluntarily submit a blood sample. If implemented statewide, these efforts will aid in the early diagnosis and treatment of infectious diseases for these officers exposed in the line of duty.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

LOCAL PREFERENCE

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.

Background: 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 and promotes local entrepreneurship while 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 in Palm Beach County are “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.”

MUNICIPAL ANNEXATION

Palm Beach County will **MONITOR** any legislation relating to the annexation of unincorporated land by municipalities.

PUBLIC RECORDS EXEMPTION FOR COUNTY ADMINISTRATORS

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** a public records exemption county administrators, deputy county administrators, and assistant county administrators.

Background: Legislation has previously been filed to create an exemption from public records requirements for the personal identifying and location information of county administrators, deputy county administrators, and assistant county administrators. County administrators handle an array of sensitive issues, which can include matters of neglect and abuse, eminent domain, code enforcement, land use, zoning, and labor and employment. Over the past several years, instances of threats of violence against these administrators have notably increased.

SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY CAPS

Palm Beach County **OPPOSES** bills that would remove or drastically increase sovereign immunity thresholds for local governments.

Background: There have been several attempts in recent years to revise sovereign immunity thresholds for local governments. Raising these thresholds would expose counties and cities to significantly higher liability costs, diverting taxpayer dollars away from critical services. It would also incentivize frivolous claims, with individuals seeking quick settlements relying on local governments wanting to forgo riskier and costly court proceedings. Ultimately, higher thresholds create financial uncertainty for local governments, forcing them to reserve funds for potential lawsuits instead of investing in long-term community needs.

SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY FOR RECREATION

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.

Background: 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.

BUILDING CODES

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 **SUPPORT** legislation to provide relief to condo owners facing the effects of required financial responsibilities and structural inspections of condominium and community associations.

Background: 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.

PROPERTY INSURANCE

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.

Background: 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. Despite these changes, 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.

ELECTION CYCLE FOR CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation that would provide for the elections of Supervisors of Elections to occur during gubernatorial election cycles rather than presidential cycles. Palm Beach County also **SUPPORTS** legislation that would provide for the elections of all Constitutional Officers to occur during gubernatorial election cycles rather than presidential cycles.

Background: Supervisors of Elections in Florida follow an election cycle prescribed by the state that requires a Supervisor to run every four years. Florida Statute 98.015 prescribes in which years a Supervisor should run for election. The way that their four-year election cycle currently works places them on the ballot in the same year as a Presidential election. Presidential election years tend to be the busiest and most intensive of the election cycles. In order to provide the best opportunities for incumbent Supervisors to effectively manage their busiest election, Palm Beach County believes that Supervisor of Election cycles should fall outside of Presidential election cycles.

EDUCATION

LIBRARIES

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the State Aid to Public Libraries program to be sustained at \$17.5 million in recurring funds in conjunction with \$6 million in non-recurring funding.

Background: A strong fiscal foundation for our public libraries is critical to the state’s economic and educational success. The State Aid to Public Libraries Grant program has been the cornerstone of public library support in our state since 1963. State Aid funding assists Floridians with economic development resources to small businesses and job seekers, access to government services as libraries are the “go to” place for when Floridians need access to the internet, and access to educational tools and reading.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** full funding to support all eligible applications for grant funding under the Library Construction Grants program.

Background: As Florida adds thousands of new residents every month, public library infrastructure needs to grow to service this increased demand. The addition of new libraries assists residents with getting access to services and resources by reducing the distance residents have to travel to their local library. New libraries also incorporate the latest technology and designs to create welcoming community spaces.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** an appropriation of at least \$2 million for Library Cooperatives.

Background: The Palm Beach County Library System is a member of the regional multi-type library consortia known as the Southeast Florida Library Information Network (SEFLIN), which connects both public and academic libraries. The community is served more effectively through the joint use of technology, continuing education and training of library staff. In FY 24-25, funding for the Cooperatives was \$2 million. Each grantee is awarded up to \$400,000. These funds are critical for the continued operation of 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 reciprocal borrowing services, continuously upgrading the skills of library employees to improve the experience of library customers, and create connections between libraries to encourage the adoption of new technologies and services.

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.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** efforts to raise the income threshold and expand fiscal eligibility for Early Learning and School Readiness Programs, helping families avoid the "fiscal cliff" and maintain access to quality early education.

PALM BEACH COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the legislative agenda put forward by the School District of Palm Beach County, unless issues specifically conflict with a County position.

PALM BEACH STATE COLLEGE

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 an eight-bay unit with modern equipment to educate and train the next generation of automotive technicians.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** Palm Beach State College's request for funding to assist with the second phase of their efforts to establish a Construction Technology Services Degree at the College. Funds will be utilized to provide expanded classrooms and labs at their Lake Worth campus to prepare students for employment as skilled technicians and supervisors across multiple disciplines in the construction trades.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** Palm Beach State College's efforts 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** funding for the second phase of construction of the FAU Health Professions Clinical Training and Research Facility on the Boca Raton Campus. This 150,000-square-foot facility will provide state-of-the-art clinical, educational, and simulation space to prepare the next generation of healthcare professionals.

Palm Beach County also **SUPPORTS** Florida Atlantic University's Strategic Plan and any associated appropriations that expand student access, grow enrollment, and strengthen outcomes for the region and the State of Florida. These efforts include the recruitment and retention of top faculty in instruction and research, as well as the expansion of health programs and research infrastructure.

Finally, Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the continued funding of the FAU Lab Schools Center for Educational Strategy and Innovation, which leverages the district's proven record of educational excellence to equip teachers, administrators, and leaders statewide with the tools to replicate FAU's successful model across Florida.

CAREER EDUCATION FUNDING

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

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** full funding of the Cultural Grant application list as approved by the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs (DCA).

Background: The 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. The arts and culture are an integral part of the state and local economy, creating thousands of jobs and making our communities better places to live, work and play.

GLADES CAREER READINESS ROUNDTABLE

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** 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.

FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAMS

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

Background: 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.

HUNGER RELIEF PLAN

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation and funding to help support the Palm Beach County Hunger Relief Plan, local non-profits and local farmers.

Background: Nationally, more than 44 million Americans have trouble regularly putting nutritious food on the table. Despite its wealth, more than 170,000 residents in Palm Beach County struggle

with hunger. People cannot 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.

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

ALTERNATIVE WATER SUPPLY, WATER RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT, & INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** alternative water supply, water resource development and reclaimed water/reuse funding through existing mechanisms and the creation new statewide funding programs to provide substantial and perennial funding to: enhance regional and local water resource and supply capacity development; provide adequate and reliable long-term funding for water and wastewater infrastructure; provide funding for alternative water supply development; provide funding for water quality protection and treatment of impaired waters; and establish a system for prioritizing water resource projects to ensure that funding is utilized in the most efficient manner available.

Background: As water and wastewater infrastructure ages, it becomes necessary to repair or replace aged components of the water infrastructure framework, as well as to integrate innovative technologies and approaches to provide high quality water and wastewater service. In its most recent Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs Survey and Assessment, the United States Environmental Protection Agency identified significant infrastructure Repairs and Replacements (R+R) that will be required in the decades ahead. The assessment identified nearly \$17 billion worth of upgrades needed in Florida. Provision of high-quality water and wastewater service provides basic building blocks for economic sustainability and advancement. Municipal and County governments will require assistance from state and federal sources to tackle these growing challenges.

The Department of Environmental Protection is currently administrating a Reclaimed Water Work Group that is developing recommendations on several policy and funding issues relating to reclaimed water and associated projects, including funding mechanisms to restore funding for alternative water supply and reuse projects.

BEACH AND INLET MANAGEMENT PROJECT FUNDING

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the inclusion of all Palm Beach County shore protection projects in the State's Beach Management Funding Assistance Program. For 2026, the Palm Beach County grant funding requests total \$30,726,537 with a local match of \$35,029,363.

Background: Florida's beaches are the focus of our tourism industry and are critical in maintaining Florida's tourism brand. Their role in providing upland property protection against storm damage makes them key components of our economy. The benefits to property values, tourism, and jobs by maintaining healthy beaches far outweigh the investment needed to combat coastal erosion. Seventy-one and a half (71.5) percent of beaches in Palm Beach County are designated as critically eroded by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. State matching grants are a vital component of the funding required to maintain this essential infrastructure. The County is requesting inclusion of all Palm Beach County shore protection projects in the State's Beach Management Funding Assistance Program. A table with the details of those requests follows.

Shore protection through beach nourishment is the most effective and economical strategy to protect coastal infrastructure and the tourism-based economy of the State from regularly occurring extreme weather events. The United States Army Corps of Engineers has abruptly implemented a new interpretation of policy guidelines for federally authorized shore protection projects that now requires non-federal sponsors to acquire perpetual construction easements (PCE's) from 100% of the upland owners within a project footprint before construction can proceed. Property owners are reluctant to execute these easement agreements due to overly broad language, no assurance of project construction or maintenance and no termination clause in the event the federal authorization is revoked or lapses. The new interpretation of these policy guidelines effectively terminates federal participation in several historically successful Coastal Storm Risk Management (CSRM) and future Flood Control and Coastal Emergency (FCCE) projects.

2026 Session Beach & Inlet Management Funding Requests					
No.	Project Name	Description	Grant Funding Request	Local Match	Estimated Project Cost
1	Coral Cove Dune Restoration	Construction, Monitoring	\$3,001,667	\$3,001,667	\$6,003,334
2	Jupiter Inlet Management	Construction	\$3,202,695	\$3,202,695	\$6,405,390
3	North County Comprehensive Shore Protection Project – Segment 2	Design, Construction, Monitoring	\$3,821,618	\$3,821,618	\$7,643,236
4	North County Comprehensive Shore Protection Project – Segment 3	Design, Construction, Monitoring	\$5,525,062	\$5,525,062	\$15,331,793*
5	Singer Island Dune Restoration	Design, Construction, Monitoring	\$1,699,931	\$1,359,945	\$3,399,862

6	Lake Worth Inlet Management	Design, Construction, Monitoring	\$1,890,000	\$1,890,000	\$3,780,000
7	Mid-Town Beach Nourishment	Design, Construction, Monitoring	\$3,164,935	\$3,441,065	\$6,606,000*
8	Phipps Ocean Park Beach Nourishment	Construction	\$7,558,200	\$11,821,800	\$26,380,000*
9	North Boca Raton Shore Protection Project	Design, Monitoring	\$63,470	\$63,470	\$242,000*
10	Central Boca Raton Shore Protection Project	Design, Monitoring	\$79,074	\$107,926	\$187,000
11	South Boca Raton Shore Protection Project	Design, Monitoring	\$126,385	\$200,615	\$327,000
12	Boca Raton Inlet Management	Design, Construction, Monitoring	\$593,500	\$593,500	\$1,187,000
	TOTAL		\$30,726,537	\$35,029,363	\$77,492,615*

*includes Federal funds

EXPANSION OF RECLAIMED WATER

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the legislative concepts proposed by the Florida Water and Environment Association Utility Council and concepts offered by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and other stakeholders that will promote project development and the continued effective and efficient use of reclaimed water throughout Palm Beach County.

Background: As Florida continues to experience population growth and increasing demands on the water resources of the state, the efficient and effective utilization of reclaimed water is vital to expanding the water pie and providing for the increased impacts of our growth. Over the past few years, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Water Management Districts, industry groups including the Florida Water and Environment Association Utility Council (FWEAUC), and multiple stakeholder groups have engaged in several efforts to improve legislative and regulatory requirements regarding the oversight and funding for alternative water supply projects. These stakeholders are engaged in the Potable Reuse Commission, which is looking to incorporate legislative and regulatory language regarding potable reuse water into the existing frameworks utilized for reclaimed water. Additional policy concepts include the clarification of the applicability of impact offset and substitution credits to alternative water supply projects, incentivizing approaches that promote efficiency in the utilization of reclaimed water, and other measures that will allow for the utilization of reclaimed water in the best time, place and manner as suits a given geographic area and local government.

FLORIDA RECREATION DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** appropriations to fund the FRDAP Large Project Development list up to a maximum of \$350,000 for each project, in addition to those on the Small Project Fund list up to a maximum of \$100,000 each project.

Background: The Florida Department of Environmental Protection administers the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP). This program is a competitive grant program that provides financial assistance through grants to local governments for the acquisition and development of land for public outdoor recreation purposes. This grant program has two funding thresholds, the Large Project Fund provides grants of up to \$200,000, and the Small Project Fund provides grants of up to \$50,000. In the FY25-26 legislative budget, the program was left unfunded, adversely impacting outdoor recreation opportunities for Floridians and visitors.

LAKE WORTH LAGOON INITIATIVE

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislative funding for the 2026 priority list of ranked projects as established by the steering committee of the Lake Worth Lagoon Initiative totaling \$6,592,500.

Background: The Lake Worth Lagoon Management Plan can be found at www.lwli.org.

LOXAHATCHEE RIVER PRESERVATION INITIATIVE

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislative funding for the 2026 priority list of ranked projects as established by the Steering Committee of the Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative totaling \$354,794.

SEPTIC TO SEWER CONVERSION

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** state funding assistance and grants to local governments, wastewater utilities and property owners to assist in implementing and expediting septic to sewer conversion projects to mitigate the impacts of excess nutrients on water bodies.

Background: There are 51,320 septic residential properties in Palm Beach County, 29,959 of which are within the PBC Water Utility Department service area. Of those 29,959 properties, 12,906 are residential properties less than 1 acre.

COMPREHENSIVE EVERGLADES RESTORATION PLAN PROJECTS IN PALM BEACH COUNTY

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** efforts by the State of Florida, South Florida Water Management District, United States Army Corps of Engineers, and Florida Department of Environmental Protection to advance both interim and long-term Congressionally-authorized CERP projects within

Palm Beach County that would benefit the Lake Worth Lagoon estuary and the Loxahatchee River, reduce potential flooding impacts, and increase the availability of water supplies.

Palm Beach County appreciates and **SUPPORTS** the continued funding of the C-51 Reservoir to increase water storage and reduce damaging flows to the Lake Worth Lagoon estuary.

CORAL REEF PROTECTION

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** continued efforts and dedicated, recurring funding for water quality and habitat monitoring within the Kristin Jacobs Coral Aquatic Preserve.

Palm Beach County **OPPOSES** any changes of the statewide turbidity criterion that could compromise critical shore protection efforts along the coastline without a comprehensive scientific understanding of the biological tolerances for coral species of concern.

Background: In 2017, a coral disease outbreak of unknown origin was found offshore of Miami-Dade County. This disease has since spread through all of Florida's Coral Reef and to reefs in the Caribbean. With high rates of disease transmission and rapid mortality impacts, the disease has affected nearly 50 percent of Florida's reef-building coral species including five listed under the Endangered Species Act. This disease along with coral bleaching events that have been occurring annually since 2011 are just a sample of the many threats to our fragile reef ecosystems that support Florida's fisheries and protect our coasts.

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION – LAND MANAGEMENT

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation that would help local governments fund vital land management activities within their Natural Area and Park properties. Such legislation may include, but is not limited to, adding land management to the types of activities funded by the Florida Communities Trust (Chapter 380, F.S.).

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** increased funding for the Local Trail Management Grant Program (aka Trail-Go) as established under F.S. 260.0145.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** appropriations from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund for environmental restoration and land acquisition projects that benefit both the environment and residents of Palm Beach County. Such projects include, but are not limited to, those that: 1) restore, preserve and protect the Everglades and other South Florida ecosystems (Section 373.470, F.S.); 2) restore, preserve and protect the Lake Okeechobee watershed (Section 373.4595, F.S.) , including the "downstream" Lake Worth Lagoon; 3) improve or protect water quality; 4) enhance flood protection; and/or 5) enhance water supplies.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** inclusion of the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Plan (part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, as amended) and Lake Worth Lagoon (a

regionally significant estuary) in legislation establishing dedicated funding sources for the Land Acquisition Trust Fund. Applicable legislation may include, but is not limited to, Section 373.470, F.S. (Everglades Restoration); Section 373.4595, F.S. (Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program); and Subsections 373.4592(2)(j), F.S., and 373.4592(3), F.S. (Long-Term Plan).

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** the full funding of the Florida Forever Plan positively impacting Florida's environmental sustainability and future generations of Floridians.

DERELICT VESSELS

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** continued recurring appropriations to assist local governments in removing derelict vessels that degrade the marine environment and block the use of public shorelines, berthing facilities, docks, ramps and staging areas.

FUNDING FOR MOSQUITO CONTROL TO PREVENT DISEASE

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** increased state funding for mosquito control and the eradication of mosquito borne diseases.

Background: Malaria reappeared in Florida in 2023 after a 20-year absence, giving new urgency to the preventative efforts of mosquito control programs across the state. This reminds us that even during calm periods between our endemic outbreaks of diseases such as West Nile Virus (WNV) and St. Louis Encephalitis (SLE) that the task of protecting residents from mosquito borne disease never stops. Every incidence of imported disease is an opportunity for that disease to gain a foothold in Palm Beach County, and the Mosquito Control Division strives to prevent that from happening through aggressive case investigations and proactive control efforts. Moreover, while nuisance mosquito control efforts lack the direct intention to control mosquito borne disease, the result is to diminish the potential for local mosquitoes to host those diseases. Continuing to embrace new technologies and tools to carry out this important function for the residents of Palm Beach County is crucial to this task.

PETROLEUM STORAGE TANK COMPLIANCE VERIFICATION PROGRAM

Palm Beach County (PBC) **SUPPORTS** maintaining funding for the Petroleum Storage Tank Compliance Verification Program through Local Program contracts.

Background: The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (FDEP) Division of Waste Management administers the program through Local Program contracts with the funding source coming from the Inland Protection Trust Fund. Since 1988, PBC has partnered with FDEP to inspect petroleum storage tank systems at registered fuel facilities and currently performs inspections in Palm Beach, Martin, and St. Lucie Counties.

The PBC Petroleum Storage Tank Compliance Verification Program provides the first line of defense for protecting the drinking water supplies by inspecting petroleum storage tank systems for leaks and maintenance concerns to prevent petroleum discharges and costly cleanup efforts by property owners. In PBC there are approximately 1,945 registered fuel facilities that operate 8,265 petroleum storage tank systems and the FDEP tasks PBC to inspect these facilities on an 18-36 month frequency. Many of these storage tank systems are decades old and are susceptible to failures and appropriate funding for the return to an annual inspection frequency would be recommended.

PETROLEUM RESTORATION PROGRAM

Palm Beach County (PBC) **SUPPORTS** maintaining funding for the Petroleum Restoration Program (PRP) through Local Program contracts.

Background: The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (FDEP) Division of Waste Management administers the PRP through Local Program contracts with the funding source coming from the Inland Protection Trust Fund. Since 1988, PBC has partnered with FDEP to provide technical and administrative oversight during the cleanup of reported petroleum discharges that occur at sites in PBC to ensure these efforts meet state standards. Since 1985, there have been 2,592 reported petroleum discharges in PBC and 2,148 of those discharges have been cleaned up (closed or conditionally closed).

The PBC Petroleum Restoration Program team is committed to the cleanup of petroleum contamination in the soil and groundwater, protecting drinking water supplies, and supporting the redevelopment and reuse of properties that have been cleaned up.

WATER RESOURCES AND WATER QUALITY

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** all water policy efforts at the state-level and through the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) that will specifically and explicitly state the commitment to provide necessary water supply protection for Palm Beach County.

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** appropriations to provide for vital water quality improvement programs and projects, including funding for planning and monitoring, to address nutrient pollution and harmful algal blooms, that impact the County's lakes, canals, and estuaries. Septic to sewer conversions, improving storm water management systems, and innovative technologies to mitigate or clean up harmful algal blooms are examples of projects that can reduce damaging freshwater discharges and improve the water quality of discharges to the Lake Worth Lagoon. Additionally, Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** legislation to provide for effective programs and projects to further address water quality impacts.

INVASIVE SPECIES – IGUANA POPULATION CONTROL AND MITIGATION

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** efforts for funding and state partnerships with the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation to control and mitigate the invasive species iguana population in Palm Beach County.

C-51 CANAL CONVEYANCE

Palm Beach County **SUPPORTS** efforts for funding and state partnerships to finalize the conveyance of the C-51 Canal in order to facilitate the flow of water through the Loxahatchee River and the canals in Palm Beach County.

APPROPRIATION REQUESTS

PALM BEACH COUNTY

County Road 880 C-51 and Sam Senter Road Bridge Replacement	\$13,000,000
Australian Avenue Road and Drainage Improvements	\$2,500,000
Central County Sports Field House	\$2,500,000
Water Treatment Plant No. 8 Membrane Expansion	\$2,000,000
Water Treatment Plant No. 2 Membrane Expansion	\$2,000,000
Lantana Airport Southside Roadway & Drainage Improvements	\$2,000,000
Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens (Amanohashidate) Expansion	\$1,500,000
Peanut Island Coast Guard Facility and Bunker Restoration	\$1,200,000
Palm Beach County Youth Shelter/Medical Respite Expansion	\$1,000,000
Burt Aaronson South County Regional Park Cross Country Trail	\$850,000
RESTORE Reentry Program	\$500,000
Fire Rescue Water Vessels for Hazard Mitigation	\$200,000
Ocean Inlet Park Pedestrian Safety Improvements	\$125,000

LAKE WORTH LAGOON INITIATIVE

Lake Worth Lagoon Bathymetry Survey – Palm Beach County	\$110,000
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North Lake Way Living Shoreline – Town of Palm Beach	\$262,500
City of Greenacres Septic-to-Sewer Conversion	\$795,000
Peanut Island and Lake Worth Lagoon Habitat Restoration – Palm Beach County	\$660,000
Final Septic to Sewer Conversion Project – Town of Lake Park	\$500,000
Septic to Sewer Conversion – Town of Manalapan	\$3,366,000
Golfview Heights of Westgate Water System Improvements – Palm Beach County	\$399,000

LOXAHATCHEE RIVER PRESERVATION INITIATIVE

Seminole Basin Water Quality Improvements – Town of Jupiter	\$241,794
Loxahatchee River Headwaters Invasive Exotic Plant Removal – SIRWCD	\$113,000

OTHERS TO SUPPORT

Busch Wildlife Sanctuary Environmental Education Program

Els Center for Autism Specialized Autism Recreation Complex

South Florida Agricenter and Emergency Shelter at the South Florida Fairgrounds

The Boca School for Autism