

# **Palm Beach County 2024 Federal Legislative Agenda**



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## **STATEMENT OF AFFILIATIONS**

### **National Association of Counties**

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

### **Coalition for Responsible Management of Lake Okeechobee**

As a member, Palm Beach County SUPPORTS the 2024 Federal 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 Federal Climate, Energy and Resilience Legislative Priorities and Principles unless issues specifically conflict with Palm Beach County's position.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **AIRPORTS**

#### **PBI RUNWAY 10L / 28R PAVEMENT REHABILITATION**

The primary runway at Palm Beach International Airport (PBI), Runway 10L/28R, is experiencing climate-related distresses and asphalt pavement deterioration. Runway 10L/28R is the longest runway at PBI and serves air carrier, air cargo, air taxi, general aviation, and military operations. Due to its operational use and climatic impacts, the runway's condition has reached a point where major maintenance is required via mill and overlay of the asphalt pavement. The project will also update connecting taxiway geometry, rehabilitate runway shoulders, and rehabilitate airfield signage and lighting. Airport Improvement Program (AIP) discretionary funding will be pursued for this project. The current planning-level cost estimate for the project is \$48 million.

#### **NORTH PALM BEACH COUNTY GENERAL AVIATION AIRPORT RUNWAY EXPANSION**

The Palm Beach County Department of Airports is completing an Environmental Assessment that proposes to extend Runway 14/32 at North Palm Beach County General Aviation Airport (F45) from 4,300 to 6,000 feet. This project will allow the airport to fully serve its intended role as a reliever to the Palm Beach International Airport (PBI) by accommodating larger

aircraft (including jets) with fewer operational restrictions. Actions in support of the runway extension include the extension of parallel Taxiway F, realignment of Aviation Road, realignment of service roads, construction of a new air traffic control tower, and related modifications of the stormwater management system. The project is justified to accommodate existing and forecasted demand at F45 and to help relieve congestion at PBI. Airport Improvement Program (AIP) discretionary funding will be pursued for this project. The current planning level cost estimate for the project is \$35 million.

### **NORTH PALM BEACH COUNTY GENERAL AVIATION AIRPORT AIR TRAFFIC TOWER**

The Environmental Assessment for the 1,700-foot extension to Runway 14/32 at F45 includes an Air Traffic Control Tower. The Palm Beach Gardens City Commission agreed not to oppose the 1,700-foot runway extension provided Palm Beach County submits an application to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for the construction of an air traffic control tower (ATCT) and diligently pursues funding the ATCT through completion. This agreement took the form of an Interlocal Agreement, which was approved by the Board of County Commissioners in 2016. This condition of approval can best be met utilizing the FAA's Federal Contract Tower Program. Under the Contract Tower Program, the FAA contracts air traffic control services to the private sector. The FAA provides oversight and monitoring of these contract towers and the FAA certifies all contract controllers. The runway extension and ATCT at F45 would not only make the airport a more desirable reliever for Palm Beach International Airport, it would also assist in fulfilling a commitment to the neighboring community. The Department of Airports is pursuing federal funding assistance for the construction of the Air Traffic Control Tower at F45. The current planning-level cost estimate for the project is \$10 million.

### **BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW FUNDING**

Through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Airport Terminal Program (ATP), \$5 billion has been granted to provide competitive grants for airport terminal development projects that address the aging infrastructure of the nation's airports. These grants can fund projects that will improve airfield safety through terminal relocation, replace aging facilities, increase capacity, encourage competition, improve energy efficiency (including LEED accreditation standards) and increase or improve access to passengers with disabilities and historically disadvantaged populations.

In FY23, the Palm Beach County Department of Airports submitted grant applications for funding under the Airport Improvement Program: PBI Windcone Replacement; PBI PC Air units; F45 Stormwater Master Plan and LNA Stormwater Masterplan, totaling \$ 5.03 million.

## **ROAD CONSTRUCTION, RAIL AND TRAFFIC ENGINEERING**

### **INFRASTRUCTURE PACKAGES**

Palm Beach County will work with local stakeholders to advocate for and monitor competitive grant and formula programs that benefit our region. This includes existing transportation infrastructure grants as well as water and wastewater grants, including those programs that address septic to sewer conversion to achieve water quality improvements. Palm Beach County staff will distribute all appropriate potential transportation and resilience grant and funding opportunities.

### **FARM TO MARKET ROAD REPAIR – CR 880**

Agriculture is essential to the economy and to ensure the well-being and nutrition of our citizens. To transport produce from farms to our tables, trucks and other heavy equipment use rural roads which service agricultural communities. These roads experience severe and accelerated wear and tear and are typically located in areas where the resources and funds to repair these roads can be limited. Compounding these issues is that some of these roadways are built on muck soil which is very conducive to agricultural operations but not as effective as a road base.

Muck soil contains high levels of organic matter which makes it difficult to compact for stability before constructing roads or buildings on top of it. This instability makes it advantageous to de-muck land before beginning construction. The cost of de-mucking is incredibly high and determined based upon the acreage and depth of muck sitting atop of the land. In some areas in the Glades Region muck can run deeper than 10 feet, making de-mucking particularly cost prohibitive for public works projects and land development.

The state agricultural community and Palm Beach County SUPPORT funding to to repair CR 880 as quickly and efficiently as possible, so that agricultural products can be transported safely and quickly from farms to consumers.

Palm Beach County also SUPPORTS legislation to make projects on Farm-to-Market roads eligible for funding under the Rural Surface Transportation Grant program by creating a 10% set-aside within the program for, and a definition of, Farm-to-Market roads.

### **PASSENGER RAIL ON FEC CORRIDOR**

Continue to MONITOR rail development progress on the FEC corridor and the US-27 corridor to seek opportunities and additional dedicated funding for Tri-Rail service area expansion, mitigation of adverse noise impacts through continued investment in equipment to establish quiet zones, increased crossing safety, and minimizing traffic impacts where possible.

## **STATE ROAD 7 EXTENSION**

State Road 7 has been on the County's Thoroughfare Plan and Long Range Transportation Plan since 1980. It is shown on the County's Comprehensive Plan extending from Okeechobee Boulevard to Northlake Boulevard. The County has already constructed a portion of this roadway from Okeechobee Boulevard north to 60th Street. This roadway extension from 60th Street to Northlake Boulevard is considered a necessary connection for adequate traffic flow in the central/western area and will be an important safety/evacuation route. SUPPORT efforts to continue the extension of State Road 7.

## **PALM TRAN**

Palm Beach County SUPPORTS appropriations for the following Federal Transit Administration grant programs authorized in surface transportation legislation:

- Section 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities Grant Funds—This grant makes federal resources available for designated recipients to replace, rehabilitate and purchases buses and bus-related equipment. Palm Tran received \$1,996,083 in grants for Bus and Bus Facilities in FY23.
- Section 5310 Senior and Disabled Individual Grant Funds—One-third of Palm Tran's budget is allocated to Palm Tran Connection, a division that provides transportation for seniors, the disabled and individuals that are transportation disadvantaged. Palm Tran received \$1,089,000 in FY23 grants to overhaul the paratransit fleet.
- Section 5311 Capital Grant Funds—Palm Tran received \$1,050,000 in Section 5311 grant funds in FY23 to assist with operating expenses.

Palm Beach County, with the help of funding available through annual transportation appropriations and authorized formula funding, is planning to undertake the following projects:

### **Transit Worker and Pedestrian Protection Act**

Palm Beach County SUPPORTS legislation designed to protect bus operators and reduce vehicular and pedestrian accidents involving buses. The County would propose, however, removing any mandates that grant recipients cooperatively develop risk reduction plans with collective bargaining unit representatives as this might thwart the implementation of such risk reduction plans.

### **Bus Shelter Expansion**

Palm Tran is seeking \$1,078,000 in federal funding for the revitalization and expansion of bus shelters to enhance the safety and experience of the 28,000 daily passengers who utilize public transit in Palm Beach County. Customers currently



have access to approximately 3,000 bus stops throughout the system, though many stops do not have a shelter. This funding will account for 14 new shelters that are critical in delivering quality transportation services to customers. Shelter locations will span across Palm Beach County, benefiting both urban and rural communities. The shelters will include the following amenities in addition to shade: Solar Lighting; Digital Displays; Solar USB Ports; Bike Racks; and Trash Receptacles.

#### EV Charging Station for Palm Tran Support Vehicles

Palm Beach County is committed to reducing greenhouse emissions by seeking \$1,000,000 for 80 level 2 and 17 level 3 EV charging stations. This electric vehicle charging station equipment will connect an electric vehicle (EV) to a source of electricity to recharge Palm Tran support vehicles and plug-in hybrids. EV charging stations are also convenient for employees to charge their EVs while at work. Workplace charging can help attract and retain a cutting-edge workforce and demonstrate leadership in adopting advanced technologies.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL & NATURAL RESOURCES**

### **GLADES CITIES WATER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT**

The Cities of Belle Glade, Pahokee and South Bay are located in a socio-economically disadvantaged area of Western Palm Beach County. Prior to 2008, their source of water was Lake Okeechobee, an unreliable and poor quality source. The County constructed a \$58 million regional water plant using a reliable brackish water source and reverse osmosis technology to improve water supply delivery in the area. Unfortunately, the water infrastructure (pipelines) in all three cities is aged, was poorly constructed, and has greatly increased the costs in providing high quality potable water to the population of the region. As much as 40% of the water being produced by the plant is leaking into the ground, diminishing the amount of gallons per day that can be provided to customers in the Glades Region. Furthermore, the deteriorating and undersized pipes of the system have problems providing adequate pressure during maximum daily flow conditions, particularly during fire flow events. There is considerable piping in each community that needs to be replaced to stem the leakage and improve operating pressures. These improvements are desperately needed in order to preserve the high quality of the water from the new plant and to maintain adequate fire flow pressures in the system protecting the public health and safety of the citizens of the three cities. The cost to construct these improvements was originally \$25 million but existing conditions of the infrastructure has caused significant increases to the original estimated budget. To assist in the restoration of the infrastructure, the county SUPPORTS federal matching assistance to ensure the ability to deliver the highest quality water to meet established demands.

## **WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS**

SUPPORT increasing the programmatic and per-project limits of federal participation for the Lake Worth Lagoon Ecosystem Restoration Project, Continuing Authorities Program (CAP), Section 1135 from \$10 million to \$12.5 million.

The 2022 Water Resources Development Act included a \$100 million authorization for wastewater infrastructure and stormwater management to improve the water quality in the St. Lucie River, Indian River Lagoon, and Lake Worth Lagoon in Martin County, St. Lucie County, and Palm Beach County, Florida. We will work with Congress and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to seek an appropriation for a project that would meet this criteria.

SUPPORT Regional Sand Management strategies for beach renourishment projects, including a study of the feasibility of using non-domestic sources.

SUPPORT grant funding and/or matching funds for Green Cay Phase 2 Progressive Design-Build Project as an alternative water supply initiative providing for a state-of-the-art Water Purification Facility with an education/learning facility, a new sixty-three (63) acre park, and superficial aquifer production wells along with associated raw water mains to various water treatment plants.

## **NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT**

SUPPORT changes to the **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** to address recurring issues resulting in delays and increased costs in many County habitat restoration activities.

1. SUPPORT amendments to existing laws and regulations to hold Agencies accountable for their review timelines.
2. SUPPORT a revision to 40 CFR 1508.7 allowing flexibility in the interpretation of NEPA language to allow counties to utilize non-traditional alternatives to beach maintenance. The following language is suggested: "Where cumulative impact uncertainties remain or multiple resource objectives exist, adaptive management provisions for flexible project implementation, such as pilot project configuration, may be incorporated into the selected alternative."

## **ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS REGULATORY CHANGES**

Corps regulations contain timeframes for issuing or denying permits. However, federal commenting agencies often exceed regulatory timeframes when reviewing permit applications. When the Corps' process (including waiting on required comments from other agencies) exceeds the regulatory timeframes, there is currently no consequence or avenue for relief.

The County SUPPORTS an amendment to 33 CFR Part 325 (d) (10) such that a complete application (public notice) starts not only the Corps' internal timeframes for review but also the NEPA Section 7 Consultation timeframes of commenting agencies as well.

SUPPORT legislation to streamline the opportunity for local sponsors to perform all phases of Federal Shore Protection Projects and Continuing Authorities Program (CAP) projects and seek reimbursement upon completion of each phase. Local sponsors typically have extensive experience building environmental projects and understand the local conditions that can influence project timelines, costs and success. The Corps' Project Development Teams are often based out of regional or district offices and may not have the local knowledge necessary to design and construct projects in the most cost-effective manner or that optimize the potential for project success. As a result, the projects could create a financial liability to local sponsors who are obligated to fund all operation and maintenance after initial construction.

SUPPORT increased funding flexibilities by allowing the Corps to move funding between the CAP programs and projects based on need and ability, ensuring projects that are ready to proceed and capable of executing the funds can receive those funds in a timely manner.

SUPPORT full funding appropriation for the Lake Worth Lagoon Section 1135 instead of partial funding over multiple years. Palm Beach County has executed a Project Partnership Agreement with the Corps in support of the project, but partial appropriations result in construction delays and cost increases which have to be absorbed by the local sponsor.

The Corps has undertaken a series of recent perpetual easement policy shifts which is delaying and crippling Coastal Storm Risk Management (CSR) projects along the coast of Florida. As we have seen from recent hurricanes and storms, eroded beaches provide little protection for homes, businesses, roads, and other coastal infrastructure. The County SUPPORTS legislation that requires the Corps to adhere to existing easement agreements, which had previously satisfied the Corps real estate requirement, to allow these critical projects to move forward.

### **COMPREHENSIVE EVERGLADES RESTORATION PLAN (CERP)**

Excess freshwater during the wet season and inadequate freshwater during the dry season along with excess nutrients in surface water bodies is a widespread, complex, multi-dimensional problem that requires focused investment and regional-scale and local-scale water storage infrastructure and water quality treatment strategies. The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) is the roadmap to addressing these issues. However, the pace of CERP implementation has been disappointingly slow, with many projects delayed indefinitely or re-formulated with reduced scopes.

Consistent increased federal funding is critical to the full implementation of the CERP. Anything less jeopardizes anticipated benefits to the environmental and water resources of South Florida which ultimately impacts County residents, visitors and taxpayers. The County

SUPPORTS appropriating consistent federal funding and other resources to plan, design, construct, operate and maintain CERP projects.

### **LAKE OKEECHOBEE WATERSHED RESTORATION**

No estuary or community should have to endure toxic algae bloom conditions or long-term water quality degradation that have resulted due to the cumulative impacts of decades of excess stormwater flows via the regional water management system. Unfortunately, instead of looking toward a comprehensive regional strategy with the required improvements, recent operations have relied on a combination of lowering the lake to the point where agriculture, environmental, and urban water supply resiliency is impacted and allowing Lake Okeechobee to be maintained a depths that are detrimental to the health of the lake

SUPPORT a renewed focus on the implementation of regional-scale and local-scale water storage and water quality treatment projects in Lake Okeechobee tributary basins north of Lake Okeechobee consistent with the CERP. This includes identifying a timely replacement for the long term water storage that was lost when the number of Lake Okeechobee ASR wells were reduced from 200 five MGD wells to 80 five MGD wells.

### **LOXAHATCHEE RIVER WATERSHED RESTORATION PLAN**

In 1985, the U.S. Department of the Interior designated the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River a National Wild and Scenic River. In 2000, the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) was authorized by Congress and included several projects to restore the river. The goal of the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Plan (LRWRP) is to improve flows to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River and restore wetlands that form the historic headwaters of the river.

Joint state and federal planning efforts related to the LRWRP began in 2003, were put on hold in 2011 and re-started in 2015, with a much reduced project scope. County staff have been engaged in every iteration of the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration project when it was identified as the North Palm Beach County Project. In addition, Palm Beach County has acquired and restored almost 28,000 acres of natural areas and wetlands within the Loxahatchee River watershed for the benefit of the ecosystem.

Unfortunately, there are many project elements and benefits that were envisioned in CERP, approved by Congress in 2000 that are not included in the LRWRP authorized by Congress in 2020.

The County SUPPORTS efforts to collaborate with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the South Florida Water Management District and other key local stakeholders to identify potential paths to advance additional CERP projects within the County that benefit the Lake Worth Lagoon, reduce potential flood damages, and increase the availability of water supplies, similar to the benefits envisioned in CERP.

As part of its CERP obligations, the South Florida Water Management District initiated rulemaking to restrict or reserve water that is necessary for the LRWRP and to restore the watershed. County staff actively participated in this rulemaking effort to ensure that County environmental and water use objectives are achieved as well as protection of the County's natural areas and wetlands.

### **LAKE OKEECHOBEE OPERATIONS**

Lake Okeechobee is a critical component in achieving the environmental restoration, water supply, agriculture, tourism, and recreation objectives in South Florida. Lake Okeechobee is essential and interconnected to communities, businesses, public water supplies, and ecosystems. County residents, taxpayers, and visitors depend on healthy and predictable lake levels to sustain a robust and diverse economy. As such, Lake Okeechobee operations are a high priority for the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners.

The County SUPPORTS an open, transparent, and inclusive public process to development and implementation of Lake Okeechobee operations. The County has consistently provided input to the Corps on their re-evaluation of Lake Okeechobee operations, referred to as the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual or LOSOM. The Corps plans to complete the LOSOM rulemaking process and publish a Record of Decision later this year. The County continues to participate and monitor this effort.

The County SUPPORTS efforts by the Corps to ensure future Lake Okeechobee operations are appropriately evaluated, ensure the protection of water supplies, minimize the potential for water use restrictions, avoid widespread damage to the economy and ecosystems such as Lake Okeechobee, the Lake Worth Lagoon Estuary, and the Loxahatchee River, as well as compliance with state law while maintaining the original purposes of the Central and Southern Florida Project for Flood Control and Other Purposes (1948).

The County OPPOSES efforts to implement such broad flexibility and discretion into Lake Okeechobee operations that would effectively result in unpredictable impacts to water supply and the environment for the foreseeable future. The County also OPPOSES efforts by the Corps to prioritize federally-initiated operating decisions for Lake Okeechobee based on water quality conditions, while significantly reducing benefits to the Congressionally-authorized purposes for which the Corps operates the lake.

### **CORAL REEF PROTECTION AND RESTORATION**

Florida's Coral Reef is a valuable national resource that protects our shores and beaches by reducing wave energy from storms and hurricanes and provides a vital marine habitat for over 6,000 species. In 2014, a coral disease of unknown origin harmed over 50 percent of the coral species present on Florida's Coral Reef. In the wake of this disease outbreak, countless agencies and organizations have been working together to study the disease, combat additional threats, and restore our coral reefs.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coral Reef Conservation Program was established in 2000 by the Coral Reef Conservation Act. This program is charged with protecting, conserving, and restoring the nation's coral reefs by maintaining healthy ecosystem function and plays a huge role in the success of local coral conservation efforts. Due to the current stressed status of our coral reefs and the ongoing need for wide-scale restoration efforts, it is imperative that the Coral Reef Conservation Act continue to be reauthorized.

The James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 that passed Congress in 2022 reauthorized and amended the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 and triggered NOAA to prepare a National Coral Reef Resilience Strategy. Palm Beach County supports the efforts by NOAA to complete this National Strategy in a timely manner as it will have a positive effect on Florida's coastal ecosystems and marine waters.

### **OFFSHORE OIL DRILLING/EVERGLADES OIL DRILLING**

The County OPPOSES oil drilling exploration in the Everglades and offshore the state of Florida.

### **SOUTHEAST FLORIDA REGIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE COMPACT**

Southeast Florida is one of the most vulnerable areas in the country to climate change impacts, especially sea level rise. United Nations climate scientists have said that the world has only until the year 2030 to make massive and unprecedented changes to global energy infrastructure to limit climate change consequences to moderate levels. To achieve climate stabilization, greenhouse gas emissions, including carbon dioxide emissions, should be reduced. Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade and Monroe counties ("Compact counties") adopted the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact ("Compact") in 2009. The Compact includes a commitment to develop and advocate for joint state and federal legislative policies. Accordingly, the Compact counties have adopted a Federal Energy and Climate Legislative Program each year since 2011. The Compact has adopted as part of the Program the 2024 Federal Legislative Priorities to articulate the overarching goals for the Program, as well as the 2024 Federal Energy, Climate, and Resilience Legislative Principles to identify those legislative issues that Compact members will support in the upcoming legislative session.

The County is committed to supporting the Priorities and Principles established by the Compact in the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact Counties *2024 Federal Legislative Priorities and 2024 Federal Energy, Climate, and Resilience Legislative Principles* in their entirety. Current legislative priorities from the Compact Program are:

SUPPORT a whole-of-government approach to the climate crisis, commensurate to the urgency of the problem highlighted by the Working Group I (Physical Science Basis) contribution to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report, described as a "code red for humanity" by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres;

SUPPORT infrastructure investments and policies to reduce national greenhouse gas emissions 50 to 52 percent below 2005 levels by 2030 and to net zero by 2050, reach 100 percent carbon pollution-free electricity by 2035, increase renewable energy, promote zero-emissions vehicles and public transportation, and equitably increase community resilience to climate impacts, including sea level rise, storm surge, flooding, and extreme heat and precipitation;

SUPPORT legislation, policies, funding, financing, rebates and incentives to expand energy efficiency, including the increased funding for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program and Weatherization Assistance programs, as well as expansion of the eligible uses for program funds to include flood and wind protection and other resilience measures;

SUPPORT “strong, rapid and sustained reductions” in methane emissions, which the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report Working Group I contribution identifies as essential to achieving Paris Agreement targets and a significant opportunity to improve air quality, including the global Methane Pledge, a partnership to reduce methane emissions 30% from 2020 levels by 2030, and the U.S. Methane Emissions Reduction Action Plan;

SUPPORT significant federal investments in electric vehicle charging infrastructure and incentives for consumers and businesses, including low-income residents;

SUPPORT efforts to reauthorize, improve, and strengthen the National Flood Insurance Program to protect affordability and availability, and encourage greater program participation, expand the Increased Cost of Compliance Program, emphasize and increase funding for flood mitigation, and develop accurate flood maps;

SUPPORT action by the US Army Corps of Engineers to fully reassess the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control Project for future flood risk and resilience, leveraging existing flood vulnerability assessments already advanced in the region, inclusive of the incorporation of extreme rainfall intensification in all future conditions assessments, and the appropriations required for the 216 Flood Risk and the WRDA 2022 Comprehensive Studies;

SUPPORT increased funding for shore and flood protection projects, including legislation requiring the US Army Corps of Engineers to use natural and nature-based features in shore and flood protection projects whenever possible and a study of the feasibility of using all available domestic and non-domestic sources of sand in beach renourishment projects;

SUPPORT additional financial measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions economy-wide, including pricing mechanisms such as a price on carbon, and incentives

SUPPORT prohibition of oil and gas leasing off the Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf Coasts of the United States.

SUPPORT increasingly stringent vehicle emissions standards proposed by the Administration and even stricter standards to require at least 50 percent of new passenger cars and light-duty trucks sold to be zero-emission by 2030 and full electrification of the

nation's vehicles as soon as practicable, including significant minimum requirements for all vehicles, not just corporate averages; and

SUPPORT a workplace heat standard advanced by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to better protect outdoor and indoor workers and reduce the dangers of exposure to ambient heat.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY & DISASTER RELIEF**

### **NEXT GENERATION 911**

The safety and security of the nation begins with 911. Yet the 911 system remains limited by decades-old technology, and is in urgent need of modernization to what is known as Next Generation 911 (NG911). NG911 would leverage modern broadband for the benefit of the public and law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical personnel, creating opportunities for cost savings and advanced features such as the ability to send photos and videos to 911.

Without significant federal funding, there is a concern that 911 networks across the country including in rural and urban areas will not be upgraded quickly and efficiently. With a significant federal grant program, Congress can ensure that our nation's leadership in broadband technology includes the world's most advanced emergency communications networks.

Palm Beach County SUPPORTS funding to upgrade and maintain 911 networks.

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE FUNDING**

Palm Beach County SUPPORTS budget requests and funding for important criminal justice programs such as the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act (VAWA), to build on current protections and increase access to justice and safety for all survivors.

Palm Beach County SUPPORTS funding for the Second Chance Act grant program which aims to reduce recidivism and increase public safety and provide access to services to promote re-entry programs.

### **ANIMAL IMPORTATION**

Palm Beach County is concerned about the large scale importation of domestic dogs from foreign countries, which are being brought directly into our County by well-meaning animal rescue organizations. The County is concerned about limited Federal and/or State resources available to ensure that these animals are free from disease and/or to ensure proper quarantine regulations are in place and/or being followed.

Palm Beach County SUPPORTS legislation to enhance the protection for Palm Beach County pets from foreign disease.



## **UNMANNED AIRCRAFT**

The County is concerned that without a prohibition of drones over or in the proximity of critical county facilities, such as jails, law enforcement facilities, courthouses, and other government buildings, that the possibility of escapes, terrorism, and breaches in confidentiality increase significantly; all which impact public safety or potentially compromise the judicial and policy setting process.

Palm Beach County SUPPORTS a continued partnership with the FAA to ensure that critical infrastructure facilities are also protected under unmanned aircraft use rules.

## **HOMELAND SECURITY FUNDING**

Omnibus legislation could include up to \$1.5 billion for State and Local Programs, which includes funding for several stand-alone DHS/FEMA grant programs, including: state homeland security grants, UASI, and Port Security. The programs are administered primarily through formula allocations to the states, but also entail competitive grants to states and regions for specific policy areas, including critical infrastructure, counterterrorism, and transportation. Palm Beach County SUPPORTS the maintenance of current funding levels, or further enhancement of grant opportunities for security funding.

## **FEMA FUNDING FOR PRE-DISASTER MITIGATION PROGRAMS**

MONITOR any legislation concerning reauthorization of the Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act particularly language that would have a significant negative impact on public lands and recreation areas. Specifically, language should be opposed that denies funding under the Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Act for disaster relief to parks, recreation departments, beaches and other similar entities. Also, monitor any proposals for FEMA to offer pre-disaster mitigation pilot grants in communities throughout the nation.

Also, SUPPORT the National Parks and Recreation Association's legislative platform.

## **FEMA REIMBURSEMENT**

FEMA has reimbursed for Category B (i.e., protective measures) at 100% cost for the first 30 days of the hurricane relief efforts in declared storms. For Hurricane Michael, however, the timeframe was reduced to 5 days. Palm Beach County SUPPORTS maintaining FEMA reimbursement for Category B at 100% cost for the first 30 days of the hurricane relief efforts in declared storms.

The County continues to SUPPORT expedited funding relief efforts to industries and individuals affected by natural disasters.

## **FEMA COASTAL FLOOD MAPS**

FEMA transmitted the proposed Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) in December 2019. Palm Beach County's review indicated modeling questionable modeling approaches and anomalous results. These issues along with the Base Flood Elevation being several feet higher resulted in thousands of property owners being added to the agency's special flood hazard area zones, meaning mortgage holders must take out flood insurance. Palm Beach County filed and official appeal.

The county appeal had two types of issues. The first was the use of county-supplied, more recent and superior ground surface elevations (LiDAR). The second was a lack of confidence in the prediction of water levels by the model due to anomalous water levels and incongruently and inadequately explained large increases in the flood elevation.

PBC staff is recommending to the Board of County Commission to not accept the proposed FIRMs and request review by an Independent Scientific Resolution Panel (ISRP). On Thursday, January 26, 2023 BCC directed staff to not accept the proposed FIRMS and request and ISRP.

The current FIRM maps will remain in effect until the ISRP process either determines that the current modeling is sufficiently accurate or directs FEMA to correct the model and update the FIRM. The County will MONITOR the Panel's consideration.

## **FEDERAL CATASTROPHIC INSURANCE**

For years, members of Congress from Florida and other coastal states have proposed creating a regional or national catastrophe fund to pool the risk for states and reduce the burden on taxpayers from natural disasters.

Previous House proposals called for a portion of homeowner's insurance premiums in participating states to be used to create a national fund. They provided reinsurance for state disaster funds, and would create federal financial backing of the fund if necessary.

Federal Catastrophic Insurance could be modeled similar to the Federal Flood Insurance Fund and could cover hurricanes, floods, tornados, earthquakes, and other natural disasters.

The County SUPPORTS amending the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to allow multi-peril coverage from a national catastrophic insurance fund which could help create solvency for the flood program.

## **NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM (NFIP) REFORM**

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) reauthorization occurred under the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012, which was signed into law on July 6, 2012. As the NFIP struggles to stay solvent, the program is currently operating under an extension of the Authorization while Congress continues to work towards a permanent solution.

Congress must reauthorize the NFIP by March 8, 2024 to avoid a lapse in authority to sell flood insurance and borrow funds.

SUPPORT a long-term solution that can bring solvency to the NFIP without unduly burdening homeowners, businesses, and taxpayers, and ensures all property owners receive affordable flood insurance.

### **GLADES REGION FLOOD INSURANCE MAPS**

Since 2014, Palm Beach County has been coordinating with the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) and FEMA regarding incorporating information related to the rehabilitation of Herbert Hoover Dike (HHD) into flood insurance rate maps (FIRMs) for the areas surrounding Lake Okeechobee. The current flood maps do not account for improvements that have been made to HHD, correspondingly, much of the Glades region of the County is in a designated flood zone which results in increased flood insurance premiums and negatively impacts economic development.

With the completion of the HHD rehabilitation and signing of the of Final Dam Safety Action Classification memorandums on June 12, 2023 the county SUPPORTS the timely completion of assessments and certifications by ACOE to enable FEMA to prepare updated FIRMs in the Glades region and FEMA expedition of the updating of the FIRMs. The County SUPPORTS efforts to mitigate the negative economic impacts to Glades region communities until HHD repairs and expedited certifications by ACOE are completed and incorporated into updated FIRMs by FEMA.

### **FUNDING FOR ENHANCED LIGHTING IN HIGH CRIME AREAS**

In an effort to continue promoting safety in high crime areas, grant opportunities should be created to enhance lighting in these areas. According to a systematic review published by the Campbell Collaboration, improved street lighting is thought to affect crime in two ways: by increasing surveillance, thus deterring potential offenders, and by signifying community investment and pride in an area.

In Palm Beach County, Countywide Community Revitalization Team (CCRT) areas are residential neighborhoods generally characterized by infrastructure deficiencies (such as lack of water, unpaved roads or roads in substandard conditions, etc.); a need for neighborhood parks; a high number of code enforcement violations; and a high level of law enforcement need. These 85 designated areas may also be characterized by a concentration of very low to moderate-income populations and lower property values with an increased neighborhood crime rate.

Palm Beach County has adopted and currently applies Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles in order to use lighting, amongst others, as a crime deterrent and enhance public safety in numerous areas of the County.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & FINANCE**

### **OPPORTUNITY ZONE DESIGNATIONS WITH THE U.S. TREASURY**

Palm Beach County worked collaboratively with the County's municipalities to submit to the State in March 2018 the request of eligible Opportunity Zones for designation. Approximately half of the requested zones were presented to the U.S. Treasury by the State while the other half were replaced with other eligible zones. Requested zones that were eliminated included some of the most distressed areas in Palm Beach County including Riviera Beach and portions of Belle Glade where incentives for businesses would provide a significant economic boost. SUPPORT initiatives included in the Opportunity Zone Transparency, Extension and Improvement Act to sunset OZs that are not impoverished, reinstate and expand reporting requirements, create pathways for smaller-dollar impact investments, provide technical assistance to high-poverty underserved communities with flexible grants to drive investment, and extend the incentive for two years in order to facilitate continued investment.

### **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT**

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program offers a source of grant funding to states, counties, and municipalities used to meet local housing, economic and community development needs. Palm Beach County focuses its CDBG funds on investments in infrastructure and public facilities including water and sewer systems, roadways and drainage improvements, and parks and recreational facilities in lower income neighborhoods. CDBG proves particularly important in lower income communities where municipal governments are fiscally constrained and property owners cannot bear assessments for public improvements. The impact of CDBG dollars is amplified by their use to leverage public and private investment in local projects. In Palm Beach County, this is exemplified by the provision of CDBG to non-profit social service agencies which use CDBG to leverage private donations and to meet matching requirements for State and other federal funding programs. CDBG funds are also a vital tool to stimulate economic activity. In addition to the economic activity directly generated by CDBG expenditures, Palm Beach County uses CDBG to support business growth and entrepreneur development through technical assistance, financial sourcing, and other business services. Support continued and enhanced funding for the Community Development Block Grant Program.

### **NEW MARKET TAX CREDIT GRANT**

To further economic development investments in distressed areas, Palm Beach County has in the past submitted to the Federal Government New Market Tax Credit Applications. The County's Department of Housing and Economic Development (HED) business programs has experienced high success rates managing various economic development programs targeting distressed areas including programs from HUD, EPA, and USDA creating over 2,100 jobs to date. Of the \$49 million in local loan pool, \$33 million in loans have been made, creating almost \$136 million of private investment in Palm Beach County. Over the past 5

years, total NMTC allocation was \$22.5 billion. The State of FL was awarded \$821.9 million, representing 3.73% of total allocation.

SUPPORT efforts to more equitably distribute future NMTC grants nationwide.

### **INVESTMENTS SUPPORTING REDEVELOPMENT IN DISTRESSED AREAS**

SUPPORT investments by administration and Congress to increase our nation's redevelopment efforts to promote economic development and affordable housing in the County's most distressed communities including the County's Glades Region. These are historically located in areas of slum and blight, and have poverty rates in excess of 23%. Support funding for the mitigation of muck soils that result in construction cost premiums for building, infrastructure and roads providing barriers for generating job and housing opportunities.

### **FREE TRADE**

Monitor the implementation of federal trade agreements so that jobs related to Palm Beach County's agricultural industry are not adversely impacted. SUPPORT language in trade agreements that include strict measures to control the spread of animal, insect, and animal pests to protect Florida's crops and close the free trade loophole to protect produce crops.

## **HOUSING**

### **FARMWORKER AND MIGRANT HOUSING**

The farmworker housing stock within the United States is aging and in many circumstances is considered substandard for those who live there. Florida has a large number of this affected housing, which requires increased federal funding to complete repairs and renovations.

Palm Beach County SUPPORTS efforts to make Programmatic budget requests that would increase funding in the USDA Farm Labor Housing Loan and Grant Program to \$25 million and to increase funding for migrant and seasonal housing through the Department of Labor's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act-National Farmworker Jobs Program to \$15 million.

### **NEIGHBORHOOD HOMES INVESTMENT ACT**

The Neighborhood Homes Investment Act (NHIA) was again introduced in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress by Senator Cardin (D-MD) and Representative Mike Kelly (R-PA) as S. 657 and H.R. 3940. The NHIA would create a new federal tax credit to generate investments in housing in eligible census tracts. This bill allows a business-related tax credit for certain development costs for the acquisition, rehabilitation, or remediation of qualified real property (i.e., real

property affixed on a permanent foundation and comprised of four or fewer residential units, a condominium unit, or a house or apartment owned by a cooperative housing corporation).

The bill also provides for the exclusion from gross income, for income tax purposes, of the value of any subsidy provided to a taxpayer by any state energy office for purposes of improvements made to a qualified residence.

The NHIA has the potential to generate 500,000 homes over 10 years, \$125,000,000,000 of total development activity, over 800,000 jobs in construction and construction-related industries, and over \$35,000,000,000 in Federal, state, and local tax revenues.

Palm Beach County supports NHIA and other federal programs that will increase and sustain housing for homeownership and recommends that local governments be eligible to apply.

### **INCOME LIMITS**

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) uses Area Median Income as the basis for establishing 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. HUD should review its method of calculation of Area Median Income and consider revising the methodology to use median household income so that resulting income limits better reflect the entire population, and maximum rents better serve those targeted for assistance through HUD programs.

Rationale-In the case of Palm Beach County, the Median Household Income, Median Family Income, and Fair Market Rents geography are all the same— which is the entirety of the county.

To ensure we are assisting those most at need, we recommend that HUD uses the Median Household Income amount rather than the Median Family Income amount. Median *household* income is lower than median *family* income because family households usually earn more than non-family households. Census Bureau says that nationwide in 2021, median family income was \$91,162, while the median household income was \$70,784 (22% lower).

If HUD used median household income as the basis for income and rent limits, we can presume they would target the appropriate population and produce lower rental payments.

### **RURAL DEFINITION/USDA HOUSING**

Due to the USDA definition of “rural”, the City of Belle Glade does not qualify for USDA single housing programs. One factor considered for eligibility within the Rural Definition is the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) that communities are designated within. According to the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, these classifications are utilized for collecting statistics in geographical areas and not for the purpose of dispensing federal funds. Belle

Glade located in a rural region of western Palm Beach County is in dire need of housing and is distinctly different than the urbanized eastern portion of the County. Support a common updated definition of rural to set parameters for “rural” development program

In addition, continue to monitor and support opportunities through USDA and HUD to upgrade housing conditions throughout Palm Beach County.

## **HOUSING COSTS**

President Biden’s Housing Supply Action Plan aims to ease the burden of housing costs over time, by boosting the supply of quality housing in every community. The plan includes legislative and administrative actions that will help close America’s housing supply shortfall in 5 years, starting with the creation and preservation of hundreds of thousands of affordable housing units in the next three years. When aligned with other policies to reduce housing costs and ensure affordability, such as rental assistance and down payment assistance, closing the gap will mean more affordable rents and more attainable homeownership for Americans in every community.

There are four main areas of the plan that include:

- Basing grant awards on jurisdictions that are reforming land use policies with the reduction of regulatory barriers
- Piloting new financing for homes that are affordable and preventing institutional investors from purchasing the homes.
- Supporting manufactured housing, accessory dwelling units, and small-scale developments; and
- Streamlining federal financing and funding sources to help lower costs and speed development including constraints to supply including direct engagement with the builders.

Palm Beach County SUPPORTS these efforts, with focus on renters who are struggling with high rental costs, with a particular focus on building and preserving rental housing for low- and moderate-income families.

## **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

### **FAIR HOUSING FUNDING INCREASE**

The Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) funding is the only federal resource for local private enforcement and fair housing services, enabling recipients to carry out activities designed to inform the public about rights and obligations under federal, state, or local laws prohibiting housing discrimination, and to enforce those rights. Palm Beach County SUPPORTS increasing funding to \$73.5 million for FY23 to increase grant awards for multi-year enforcement grants, strengthen education and outreach grants, and begin creating private fair housing groups in areas not served by a full-service fair housing group.

The Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP) also plays an important role in handling fair housing cases filed under state and local laws. An increase would better compensate local and state government civil rights agencies for their processing and investigation of cases they receive from government entities, the public, or those that are referred to them by HUD. Palm Beach County SUPPORTS increasing funding to \$35.2 million for FHAP.

The Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO) has seen consistent understaffing which has created long delays in the investigation of complaints. These delays have caused great harm to HUD's implementation of the Fair Housing Act and Congress must support greater staffing numbers at HUD FHEO. Palm Beach County SUPPORTS increasing funding to \$153 million to support 1,125 Full-Time-Equivalent staff at HUD FHEO.

### **TITLE IV-E FUNDS**

Every state's largest source of funding for child welfare services comes from federal Title IV-E funds. In nearly every state, these funds can only be expended after the government removes a child from a home due to unsafe conditions. In 2005, Florida recommended another solution to the federal government: Allow flexibility in the use of Title IV-E funds so necessary services could be provided to children and families before safety is threatened, and before children endure the trauma of being removed from their families. Florida's Title IV-E Waiver expired in September 2019.

Palm Beach County SUPPORTS the reauthorization of Florida's Title IV-E Waiver.

### **COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT**

The goal of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) is the reduction of poverty, the revitalization of low-income communities and the empowerment of low-income families and individuals to become fully self-sufficient. The Community Services Block Grant is designed to help low-income individuals and families: secure and retain meaningful employment; attain an adequate education; improve the use of available income, obtain adequate housing, obtain emergency assistance, including health and nutrition services; remove obstacles which block the achievement of self-sufficiency; and achieve greater participation in the affairs of the community.

Palm Beach County SUPPORTS legislation which would reauthorize the program through FY 2034.

### **SOBER HOMES**

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is charged with the interpretation of the Fair Housing Amendments Act. There have been changes made by HUD regarding the language within the Fair Housing Amendments Act ("the Act") and its application to sober homes. The courts have applied the Act inconsistently over the years and this has caused a great burden to be placed upon the states and local governments, some



of which are currently facing over-concentration of sober homes in their single-family residential communities, as well as rampant abuse of vulnerable residents with substance use disorder who have been exploited by unscrupulous sober home owners and managers.

While the County has made strides with supported changes to federal rules, changes to state law, and funding of a local Sober Homes Task Force, there is still work to be done.

The County SUPPORTS continued clarifications to the Fair Housing Amendments Act and changes to state laws to prevent abuse and exploitation of patients in sober homes by operators in an effort to protect the health, safety and welfare of both the residents of the sober homes and the surrounding areas where the homes are located.

### **OPIOID USE / SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that more than 140 Americans die every day from drug overdoses—including, on average, 91 specifically from opioids.

The Cures Act passed in both the House of Representatives and Senate with strong support and was signed into law in December of 2016. The Cures Act provides multiyear funding to reduce opioid/substance use, mental research and drug development. The funding will total \$4.8 billion over the next ten years; however, the funding must be appropriated every year. In the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, HR 2379 was filed to reauthorize and expand a grant program to the states.

Palm Beach County SUPPORTS continued full-funding of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act, requests flexibility to use these dollars in support of innovative initiatives including syringe exchange programs, and will continue to monitor the activities of the federal Opioid Task Force.

Because Palm Beach County is integrating the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration's (SAMHSA) long-standing guidance related to establishing Recovery Oriented Systems of Care into its substance use disorder and behavioral health services planning, the County needs additional funding to further expand its recovery services and supports.

SAMHSA has two grant programs, Recovery Community Services Program (RCSP) and Building Communities of Recovery (BCOR) to support this integration. Palm Beach County SUPPORTS increased funding for both RCSP and BCOR grant programs to allow recovery community organizations, services and supports to further grow in the County and nationally.

### **TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS**

In December of 2019, the Board of County Commissioners drafted a letter calling for an additional extension of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua, Honduras, Sudan and Nepal beyond the 2021 expiration date.

On December 14, 2023, the Dept. of Homeland Security extended the re-registration periods for TPS designations of Haiti through August 3, 2024, and El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Sudan and Nepal through mid-2025.

Continue to monitor and request for the continuation of the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for those living in Florida who have been displaced due to economic instability and natural disasters in their country.

### **HIV/AIDS FUNDING**

Prior to 2013, Ryan White Program formulaic funding was based on the number of cumulative cases in the county. Since then, funding is based on number of cases actually living in the county. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention is responsible for funding levels based on the new criteria, but there is a 2-3 year lag on payments making their way to Palm Beach County. The County SUPPORTS efforts to increase the formula funding and ensure that the county receives a more timely and accurate payment from the CDC.

SUPPORT continuation and funding of the Health Resources and Services Administration's Ending the HIV Epidemic in the U.S., which aims to reduce the number of new infections in the United States by at least 90% by 2030.

OPPOSE efforts to divert funding from HIV Care & Treatment programs to HIV Prevention Programs.

SUPPORT legislation that requires applying additional payments, discounts, and other financial assistance towards the cost-sharing requirements of health insurance plans, and other co-pay accumulator efforts.

SUPPORT funding for Dept. of Housing and Urban Development's Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS Program (HOPWA). HOPWA is the only Federal program dedicated to addressing the housing needs of low-income people living with HIV/AIDS and their families. Grantees partner with nonprofit organizations and housing agencies to provide housing and support to these beneficiaries.

### **FAMILY CAREGIVING**

The RAISE (Recognize, Assist, Include, Support and Engage) Family Caregivers Act, which became law on January 22, 2018, directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop a national family caregiving strategy. This strategy is intended to identify actions that communities, providers, governments, and others may take to recognize and support family caregivers.

Because there are at least 1.3 million caregiving youth in the United States ages 8-18 years old, Palm Beach County SUPPORTS continued resources for caregiving youth.

## **FISCAL CLIFF**

2022 data show that 12.7% of Floridians and 7.9% of Palm Beach County families live in poverty. These numbers not only affect individual families, but also businesses and Florida's economy. Many social services designed to help low-income working individuals and families have "financial cliffs," where small increases in incomes will disqualify families from receiving any level of financial assistance.

A soft cliff results when benefits slowly phase out as income increases, which are a more favorable benefit structure, as the family is not significantly penalized when their income increases. Hard cliffs occur when a marginal increase in income results in a significant or complete loss in benefits, meaning that a small increase in income can result in thousands of dollars in lost resources. The hard cliff benefit structure is detrimental to family resources, yet hard cliffs are the types most often faced by Florida families in poverty.

The County SUPPORTS revising eligibility policies to eliminate or greatly reduce the "financial cliff" effect for social services that support children and families trying to work their way out of poverty and would incentivize efforts to increase wages and create a pathway to economic self-sufficiency.

## **MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FUNDING**

The County SUPPORTS the continued appropriation of funds for mental health services. It is estimated that untreated and mistreated mental illness costs American business, government and taxpayers \$113 billion annually. The County SUPPORTS efforts to develop evidence based community care that is accessible to all as well as treatment models that provide for a coordinated continuum of care for patients. Funding efforts should not be solely focused on treating those with the most disabling forms of mental illness, but rather a range of prevention, wellness, and crisis treatment, as well as educational outreach to reduce the stigmatism surrounding mental health. This also would include supporting legislation that seeks detection of stress and suicide prevention in rural farming areas of the country. Additionally, the county SUPPORTS protecting the expansion of mental health benefits and insurance parity protections under the Affordable Care Act.

## **VETERANS' HOMELESSNESS**

According to the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, over 40,000 veterans are homeless on any given night. In Palm Beach County, there has been a 73% increase in homeless veterans over previous years.

Bills introduced in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress include HR 645, the Healthy Foundations for Homeless Veterans Act sponsored by Rep. Sheila Cherfilus McCormick, which would permanently authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to use specified funding to provide assistance to homeless veterans and veterans participating in the Department of Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program. Sen. Marco Rubio

sponsored S. 290, the Preserving Our Commitment to Homeless Veterans Act, Which would require the VA to provide case management support to local housing authorities under the VA-supported housing program.

Palm Beach County SUPPORTS efforts and programs put forth by the federal government to assist in ending homelessness for our veterans.

### **VETERANS/PENSION POACHER**

Individuals known as “pension poachers” are those who charge to ostensibly assist seniors with applying for benefits, but often times are trying to do little more than prey on America's elderly and disabled veterans. It is illegal for anyone who is not an approved agent or attorney to charge veterans a fee for assisting them in filing a claim or appeal with the VA; however, there is currently no penalty for violations. Due to this, veterans are being defrauded, often up to thousands of dollars, by financial predators who charge fees and provide little to no help.

SUPPORT legislation that would make it easier to identify and penalize individuals participating in these types of scams that have compromised a veteran’s ability to receive their pension benefits.

### **SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM/THE EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of needy families so they can purchase healthy food and move towards self-sufficiency. SNAP program reductions and changes in the President’s 2022 proposed budget would move toward providing food delivery as a portion of the benefit, rather than providing stipends for local purchases. SNAP was reauthorized along with other food and agriculture programs in the 2018 Farm Bill, which is set to expire, after extension, on September 30, 2024. Though SNAP is an entitlement, it still receives funding annually through the congressional appropriations process, meaning benefit availability can be impacted by government shutdowns.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is a federal program that helps supplement the diets of people with low income by providing them with emergency food assistance at no cost. USDA provides 100% American-grown USDA Foods and administrative funds to states to operate TEFAP.

SUPPORT appropriate funding for SNAP and TEFAP, allowing participants to access the most appropriate food choices for each participating family.

## **WOMEN INFANTS AND CHILDREN (WIC) PROGRAM**

WIC is a federally funded nutrition program for Women, Infants, and Children. WIC provides the following at no cost healthy foods, nutrition education and counseling, breastfeeding support, and referrals for health care and community services. The WIC program is designed to serve certain categories of women, infants and children, specifically: Pregnant Women (during pregnancy and up to 6 weeks after the birth of an infant or the end of the pregnancy); Postpartum Women (up to six months after the birth of the infant or the end of the pregnancy); Breastfeeding Women (up to the infant's first birthday); Infants (up to the infant's first birthday); and Children (up to the child's fifth birthday).

Congress, on a bipartisan basis, has fully funded WIC for more than 25 years. As lawmakers work to finalize full-year funding bills, it is critical that they honor that long-standing commitment and give WIC the funding it needs to serve every low-income family who seeks assistance and to provide participants with the full science-based benefit. If Congress fails to do so and continues WIC's current funding level for the rest of the fiscal year, WIC will face a roughly \$1 billion shortfall in 2024. As a result, states would need to reduce WIC participation by about 2 million young children and pregnant and postpartum adults nationwide by September, compared to anticipated participation if full funding were provided. In Florida alone, that could lead to 126,000 eligible people turned away from the program.

The county SUPPORTS adequate funding for the WIC program to serve all eligible mothers and babies.

## **FARM BILL REAUTHORIZATION**

Set to expire in 2023, the Farm Bill is an omnibus, multiyear law that governs an array of agricultural and food programs impacting counties, including SNAP as well as grant funding and loan financing for water/wastewater infrastructure, community facilities, broadband, electric, telephone, housing, renewable energy and business development in rural communities. The Farm Bill was extended to by the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress and President Biden in November which allows authorized programs to continue through September 30, 2024.

SUPPORT Farm Bill Reauthorization with focus on strengthening federal nutrition programs, family farms and young farmer support, land and water conservation, and rural economic development and housing.

## **EDUCATION AND BROADBAND**

### **FUNDING FOR THE INSTITUTE FOR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES AND THE LIBRARY SERVICES AND TECHNOLOGY ACT**

The majority of federal library funds are distributed through IMLS to each state through the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA). LSTA funds technology purchases and related activities. In 2020, \$68,387 was awarded to Palm Beach County through the Florida Department of State to fund Digital Media Labs at 13 of our branch locations. In 2021 Palm

Beach County received two grants awards. \$103,864 was received to deploy digital display signage at all locations. Additionally, \$64,913 was awarded to upgrade the assistive listening devices in all library meeting rooms.

Palm Beach County SUPPORTS full funding for The Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) at up to \$232 million dollars, the maximum authorization based on the last reauthorization. This would be an increase of \$21 million over FY 23 when it was funded at \$211 million.

### **E-RATE AND UNIVERSAL SERVICES FUNDING**

E-rate, also known as the Universal Services Schools and Libraries program, is the program that provides discounts to public libraries and schools on telecommunications services, internet access, Wi-Fi equipment, and closely related costs. The E-Rate program E-rate program has a positive impact in increasing broadband capacity and Wi-Fi access.

Palm Beach County SUPPORTS full funding for the E-Rate and Universal Services programs which support telecommunications and internet access.

### **NETWORK NEUTRALITY**

Network neutrality is the principle that internet service providers should treat all data equally and should not discriminate or provide preference to any data. Without strong net neutrality protections, internet service providers may block, throttle, or prioritize certain legal internet traffic. A non-neutral net gives entities who can afford to pay more, control over what information every American can access, potentially relegating libraries and other non-commercial enterprises to the internet's "slow lanes."

Palm Beach County SUPPORTS Network Neutrality in order to ensure all our residents equality for their Internet traffic.

### **BROADBAND ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY**

President Biden's *Internet for All* initiative, as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, is a \$65 billion investment to ensure all Americans can access affordable, reliable, high speed internet.

The Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment Program (BEAD) will disperse \$42.5 billion in grants to states to lay critical groundwork for the infrastructure needed to connect everyone, from big cities to small towns and everything in between.

The Affordable Connectivity Program is an FCC benefit program that helps ensure that households can afford the broadband they need for work, school, healthcare and more. The benefit provides a discount of up to \$30 per month toward internet service for eligible households. Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to

purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers if they contribute more than \$10 and less than \$50 toward the purchase price.

Palm Beach County will MONITOR the BEAD and Affordable Connectivity Programs and explore other opportunities to ensure reliable, affordable broadband access to all.

Too many communities lack access to high-speed Internet. Many more can't afford it or don't know how to use it. The divide between those who have Internet access and those who don't is stark. To create an equitable economy, we all need access to reliable and affordable high-speed Internet.

Palm Beach County supports The Digital Equity Act, which provides \$2.75 billion to establish three grant programs that promote digital equity and inclusion. They aim to ensure that all people and communities have the skills, technology, and capacity needed to reap the full benefits of our digital economy.

## **CYBER SECURITY**

Cyberspace and its underlying infrastructure are vulnerable to a wide range of risk stemming from both physical and cyber threats and hazards.

A range of traditional crimes are now being perpetrated through cyberspace. This includes child exploitation conspiracies, banking and financial fraud, intellectual property violations, elections data breaches and other crimes, all of which have substantial human and economic consequences.

Palm Beach County SUPPORTS legislation to strengthen the security and resiliency of cyberspace.

## **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

To reflect Palm Beach County's commitment to a responsible and inclusive approach towards AI integration, prioritizing not only technological advancement but also the well-being and support of all members of our workforce, the county SUPPORTS the following:

### **Local AI Development and Integration Advocacy:**

Seek federal support for the development of Generative AI technologies in Palm Beach County, including funding for startups, research and development tax incentives, and collaboration grants between businesses and academic institutions.

### **Establishment of Ethical AI Guidelines:**

Propose federal guidelines for ethical AI use, focusing on data privacy, misuse prevention, and transparency. Local oversight committees should be established to monitor AI development and usage.

#### Focus on Education, Workforce Development, and Support for Displaced Workers:

- Federal investment in local AI education and workforce upskilling programs.
- Initiatives for workers to acquire AI-related skills.
- Partnerships between AI companies and educational institutions for practical training.
- Career transition support services for workers displaced by AI, including job placement assistance and financial support during retraining.
- Development of programs specifically aimed at supporting individuals who cannot upskill, including alternative employment opportunities and social safety nets.

#### Enhancing Infrastructure for AI Development:

Requesting federal assistance to upgrade the technological infrastructure of Palm Beach County, vital for AI development and implementation.

#### Increasing Public Awareness and Engagement with AI:

Advocating for federal support in raising public awareness about AI, ensuring the community is informed about its impacts.

#### Promoting Cross-Sector AI Collaboration:

Encouraging the federal promotion of AI across various industries in Palm Beach County to maximize community benefits.

#### Monitoring AI Impact and Policy Adjustment:

Recommending federal mechanisms for continuous evaluation of AI's impact on the local economy and workforce for timely policy modifications.



## **FY 2025 POTENTIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

Palm Beach County will seek federal funding opportunities, including appropriations, Community Project Funding and grants for all Federal Agenda items, including:

Peanut Island Historic Restoration  
CR 880 – Farm to Market Roads  
Palm Beach Lakes Boulevard Bridge  
Palm Tran – Bus Shelters, EV Charging Stations  
Workforce Affordable Housing  
Green Cay Phase 2  
RESTORE Reentry  
Senior Art & Education Program  
Fresh Food Box Program  
Hispanic Resource Center  
State Black History Museum  
Village of Valor/Liberty Village  
Airport Rental Car Center  
West Atlantic Park Improvements