



## II. FISCAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

### A. Five Year Summary of Fiscal Impact:

Fiscal Years					
Capital Expenditures					
Operating Costs					
External Revenues					
Program Income(County)					
In-Kind Match(County)					
NET FISCAL IMPACT					
#ADDITIONAL FTE					
POSITIONS (CUMULATIVE					

Is Item Included in Current Budget?                      Yes        No  
 Does this item include the use of federal funds?      Yes        No

**Budget Account No:**

Fund            Agency            Organization            Object

### B. Recommended Sources of Funds/Summary of Fiscal Impact:

### C. Departmental Fiscal Review:

## III. REVIEW COMMENTS:

### A. OFMB Fiscal and/or Contract Dev. and Control Comments:

*Lisa Maitz* 1/26/2023  
 OFMB JA 126 *EW*  
 1-26-23

*Ann J. Jacoby* 1/27/23  
 Contract Dev. & Control  
 1/26/23

### B. Legal Sufficiency

*Anne Delgado* 1/30/23  
 Assistant County Attorney

### C. Other Department Review

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Department Director

(THIS SUMMARY IS NOT TO BE USED AS A BASIS FOR PAYMENT.)

# **Palm Beach County 2023 Federal Legislative Agenda**



## **Board of County Commissioners**

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Maria G. Marino  
Michael A. Barnett  
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Mack Bernard  
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# **TRANSPORTATION**

## **AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL TOWER**

The Palm Beach County Department of Airports is currently preparing an Environmental Assessment for a 1,700-foot extension to Runway 14-32 at F45. 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 FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018 makes contract tower construction and equipment eligible for funding from the Small Airport AIP account. The runway extension and an 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.

## **BIL DISCRETIONARY 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 FY22, the Palm Beach County Department of Airports submitted an application for our Preconditioned Air (PC Air) Point of Use Project at Palm Beach International Airport (PBI); however, we were unsuccessful in being selected for this funding. On October 24, 2022, in response to the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for FY23, the Department of Airports once again submitted an application for this project with a request for \$10.5M of the total project cost of \$13.1M. The application is currently pending review by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). This project will provide for the replacement of the existing centralized PC Air system with new "Point-of-Use" (POU) PC Air units at all twenty-eight (28) existing boarding bridges on Concourses B and C at PBI. The existing centralized system is inefficient and beyond its useful life, and is in need of major improvements. The project will also provide a new automated control system to monitor and optimize the

operation of both the PC Air and 400 Hz GPU units, as well as provide new electrical infrastructure to support the new PC Air POU units. This project is “shovel ready”.

## **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**

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.

Palm Beach County SUPPORTS resources being made available to rural communities to assist in repairing these roads as efficiently as possible, so transport of agricultural products can move safely and quickly from farms to consumers.

A Language request was made to the office of Rep. Sheila Cherfilus McCormick that would direct the Department of Transportation to consider farm-to-market roads as an eligible project within the FY 23 Surface Transportation Block Grant Program.

### **PASSENGER RAIL ON FEC CORRIDOR & US-27 CORRIDOR**

Brightline has developed a privately owned, operated and maintained intercity passenger rail service in southeast Florida. Its first trains began operations between its newly built stations in Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach in January 2018, and later connected to a station in downtown Miami. A future Intermodal Station is currently under construction at the Orlando International Airport as well as a station in Boca Raton. 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.

## **GLADES AREA ROAD CONSTRUCTION/STREET REPAIR**

More than any other issue facing Belle Glade, South Bay and Pahokee today, the repair and rebuilding of streets are the cities' number one concern. The three cities have outlined road resurfacing and reconstruction projects on Collector/Residential Roadways. SUPPORT the tri-cities request to continue repair and maintenance on these roads essential for future economic recovery in the region.

## **TRUCK SIZE AND WEIGHT**

There is concern that Congress is considering changes to federal standards that would increase the allowed truck size and weight on roads. Longer and heavier trucks accelerate the deterioration of roads and bridges, putting additional pressure on financially strained local governments to fund infrastructure. Since most truck trips begin and end on the local road system, local government agencies would face increased responsibility for impacts and repairs. Taxpayers subsidize heavy truck operations by nearly \$2 billion each year on federally funded roadways, and an equal amount annually on state and locally funded roadways, since truck fees do not cover the damage that trucks do to roads and bridges. Additionally, road safety would be strongly affected. Longer trucks are harder to steer and have poorer stability, a longer stopping distance, and a larger crash footprint. These characteristics contribute to them having a higher fatal accident involvement rate than smaller trucks.

**OPPOSE** any legislation that seeks to increase truck size or weight limits beyond those in current federal law because of the tremendous highway safety, infrastructure damage, and transportation funding implications.

## **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 \$1,936,280 in grants for Bus and Bus Facilities in FY22.

- 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 \$1,999,743 in FY22 grants to overhaul the paratransit fleet.
- Section 5311 Rural Grant Funds—Palm Tran received \$353,821 in Section 5311 grant funds in FY22 to assist with providing service to Palm Beach County residents in the Glades region.

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

#### Palm Tran Connection Efficiencies Initiative

After a successful implementation of Palm Tran’s Route Performance Maximization (RPM) Project, which was a comprehensive evaluation and system-wide redesign of the bus network, Palm Tran is embarking upon a similar overhaul for Palm Tran Connection. Besides Miami-Dade Transit, Connection provides more paratransit trips than any other provider in the State of Florida. Palm Tran is seeking to revamp the process for eligibility determinations, reservation procedures, existing policies and future growth strategies. In addition, Connection seeks to implement its fleet replacement schedule making it more nimble and adaptable to the quickly changing transit landscape.

Palm Tran Connection is a vital service in the community. Palm Tran will revamp the service in order to control growth and continue meeting the community’s needs. Palm Beach County is seeking \$500,000 for the procurement of consulting assistance on this project.

#### 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 Beach County is requesting \$10 million to completely overhaul our bus shelter inventory. This includes replacing 150 of 330 existing shelters that are between 10

and 15 years old, and 250 additional shelters for a new total of 580. Currently, 18% of our 3,000 stops have shelters. The existing shelters are deteriorating and need replacement as well as upgrades to shelter pads to maintain ADA compliance. Additional shelters are necessary to protect riders from the weather, especially during the summer months and rainy season.

#### Electric Bus Transition Initiative

Palm Beach County is committed to reducing greenhouse emissions, the County is listed in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 2018 National Priority Area List, as an area where the population is exposed to more than 2.0µg/m<sup>3</sup> of diesel particulate matter emissions. The County requests funding for the acquisition of four (4) electric buses and charging stations at a cost of \$6,000,000; to be used by Palm Tran in the provision of Fixed Route Public Transportation.

## **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 funding for the County proposed Continuing Authorities Projects for habitat restoration in the Lake Worth Lagoon and Lake Okeechobee.

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.

### **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 2022 Federal Legislative Priorities to articulate the overarching goals for the Program, as well as the 2022 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 2022 Federal Legislative Priorities and 2022 Federal Energy, Climate, and Resilience Legislative Principles in their entirety. Current priorities from the Compact Program are:**

SUPPORT a whole-of-government approach to the climate crisis, commensurate to the urgency of the problem most recently highlighted by the Working Group I (Physical Science Basis) contribution to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 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 carbon emissions 50 percent below 2005 levels by 2030 and to net zero by 2050, 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 increased funding for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program and weatherization 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.

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 with provisions that limit premium rate increases and protect affordability, encourage greater program participation, expand the Increased Cost of Compliance Program, emphasize and increase funding for mitigation, and develop accurate flood maps.

SUPPORT action by the US Army Corps of Engineers to fully reassess the Central and South Florida Flood Control Project for future flood risk and resilience, including leveraging existing flood vulnerability assessments already advanced in the region.

SUPPORT reauthorization of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 and increased funding for coral reef health, protection, and restoration.

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 measures to reduce carbon emissions economy-wide, including establishment of a national price on carbon, especially revenue-neutral and public dividend proposals.

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

SUPPORT revised vehicle emissions standards proposed by the Administration and even stricter standards to require at least 50 percent of new vehicle sales be electric 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.

### **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 short-term 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, much recent discussion has focused on drastically lowering Lake Okeechobee, which has the potential to negatively affect public water supply utilities, businesses, and communities throughout the County.

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.

The Corps reinitiated efforts to advance the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project (Project) early in 2022. This Project will increase water storage in the basins north of Lake Okeechobee, improve the quantity and timing of discharges to the northern estuaries, restore wetlands, and improve water supply for consumptive users. After presenting a revised Recommended Plan, the Corps released an Integrated Project Implementation Report and Environmental Impact Statement in February 2022. The Corps seeks to finalize the Project design and publish a Chief's Report later this year.

## **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 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 Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Plan 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 Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project 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 Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Plan 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 re-evaluate Lake Okeechobee operations. The County is actively working with 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, maximize 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**

The Florida Reef Tract 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 in the Florida Reef Tract. The National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration Coral Reef Conservation Program was established in 2000 by the Coral Reef Conservation Act to protect, conserve, and restore the nation's coral reefs by maintaining healthy ecosystem function. Due to the coral disease outbreak, the reauthorization of the Coral Reef Conservation Act is integral to the success of the restoration efforts.

The Restoring Resilient Reefs Act of 2021 (RRRA) that would reauthorize and modernize the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 was included in the 2022 National Defense Authorization Act that passed Congress.

### **WATERS OF THE UNITED STATES (WOTUS)**

Palm Beach County SUPPORTS efforts by the federal government to further clarify the definition of "Waters of the United States" under the Clean Water Act. The County SUPPORTS legislative and regulatory efforts to balance the needs of a growing population and economy with the need to protect and preserve those natural resources that are vital to support that growth. The County understands the meaning and purpose of the Clean Water Act and the federal goal of protecting the nation's water resources while providing clarity and certainty for the regulated community. Any approach to protecting water quality in America must be accomplished through the Clean Water Act's vision of cooperative federalism, including partnerships at the local, regional and state levels.

On December 30, 2022, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) announced a final rule once again updating the definition of “waters of the United States” (WOTUS) and, therefore, the scope of federal jurisdiction under the Clean Water Act (CWA). This is the Biden Administration’s attempt to create a durable definition of WOTUS as planned in 2021, ostensibly by finding a middle ground between the vacated Obama-era Clean Water Rule and the vacated Trump-era Navigable Waters Protection Rule.

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

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

## **PUBLIC SAFETY & DISASTER RELIEF**

### **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.

### **HURRICANE RELIEF SUPPORT**

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.

### **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.

## **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 November 10, 2022, the Dept. of Homeland Security extended the validity of TPS-related documentation for these countries while the preliminary injunction in Ramos v. Wolf and the stay of proceedings order in Bhattarai v. Nielsen remains in effect, provided they remain individually eligible for TPS. On January 25, 2023, the DHS extended Haiti's designation for an additional 18 months, through August 3, 2024, provided they continue to meet TPS eligibility requirements.

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.

## **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.

### **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 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 September 30, 2023.

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). Under the current flood maps, which do not account for improvements that have been made to HHD, 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. The County SUPPORTS continued efforts to expedite repairs to HHD for a timely 2022 completion and SUPPORTS the timely completion of assessments and certifications by ACOE to enable FEMA to prepare updated FIRMs in the Glades region. 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 \$20.5 billion. The State of FL was awarded \$398.5 million, representing 1.94% of total allocation.

SUPPORT efforts to more equitably distribute future NMTC grants nationwide.

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

SUPPORT investments by administration and Congress to increase our nation's redevelopment efforts to promote economic development in the County's most distressed communities including the County's Glades Region and areas surrounding FEC or CSX rail lines. These are historically located in areas of slum and blight, have poverty rates in excess of 23%, in food deserts or on contaminated sites. Include funding for soil de-mucking, brownfield cleanup and alternative transportation options for surrounding residents generating job and housing opportunities and reducing environmental injustice, Streamline and shorten the federal permitting process while still requiring robust public participation and world-class environmental stewardship.

### **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.

The Belle Glade Housing Authority recently applied for \$8M in grant funding and \$2.6 in Loan Funding from the USDA Off-Farm Labor Housing Direct Grant. The funding available nationwide is limited to \$17.5M for grants and \$5.5M for loans, so there is a dire need for an increase in this funding.

## **NEIGHBORHOOD HOMES INVESTMENT ACT**

The Neighborhood Homes Investment Act (NHIA) was introduced in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress by Senators Cardin (D-MD) and Portman (R-OH) as S. 98 and by Representative Higgins (D-NY-26) as H.R. 2143. The NHIA would create a new federal tax credit to generate investments in housing in eligible census tracts. States would be allocated NHIA credits in the amount of \$6 per capita annually up to a nationwide maximum of \$2 Billion. State housing finance agencies would award credits to NHIA managers who would sell credits to raise equity for the construct or rehabilitate homes for owners with incomes up to 140% of Median Family Income. It is estimated that nationwide, NHIA would result in construction or rehabilitation of 500,000 homes and \$100 Billion of development activity. Palm Beach County has numerous NHIA-eligible tracts in both the eastern and western regions of the county, and would partner with the private sector to use NHIA credits to preserve aging homes and expand our affordable housing stock.

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 2031.

### **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 passed by the House in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress include HR 240 which would give homeless veterans with dependents service priority under homeless veterans reintegration programs and HR 1257 which would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to conduct a comprehensive study on access to, and use and effects of, financial and credit counseling for homeless veterans and veterans experiencing housing instability.

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

### **FAMILY CAREGIVING**

The RAISE 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 resources for caregiving youth.

### **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 parity protections under the Affordable Care Act.

### **MENTAL HEALTH PARITY & SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER ACT**

Congress passed the landmark Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008, with overwhelming bipartisan support to end discrimination in mental health and substance use disorder insurance coverage. Despite the 2008 law, lack of mental health parity continues to limit insurance-covered access to care, which causes personal suffering and other handicaps, economic and legal burdens, and a loss of productivity for those persons so affected

In the 117th Congress, several bills (HR 1364 and HR 3753 and S 1962) were filed to enforce and expand the Federal 2008 Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act.

The Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners, recognizing the Mental Health and Parity Addiction Equity Act of 2008, and recognizing the need for access to treatment for mental illness and substance abuse, knowing it will further and improve the quality of life for all, SUPPORT laws which require full mental health parity and urge insurance providers to comply with such laws.

### **FAIR CHANCE IMPROVEMENT ACT**

The Fair Chance Improvement Act would require both the federal government and federal contractors to remove the conviction history question from their job applications and defer any background checks to the end of the hiring process. It includes exceptions for law enforcement and national security jobs, positions requiring access to classified information, and those for which access to criminal history information before the conditional offer stage is required by law.

Palm Beach County SUPPORTS the passage of the Fair Chance Improvement Act.

### **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.

## **FUNDING FOR SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION 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 September 30, 2023. Though SNAP is an entitlement, it still receives funding annually through the congressional appropriations process, meaning benefit availability can be impacted by government shutdowns.

SUPPORT appropriate funding for, and reasonable changes to, SNAP that allows the flexibility to access the most appropriate food choices for each participating family.

## **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.

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**

### **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 \$35 million over FY 22 when it was funded at \$197.4 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.