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May 26, 2026

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Senator Carlos Guillermo Smith Secures \$8 Million+ In State Budget For Central Florida Families, Nonprofits, and Municipalities

Smith's leadership was also instrumental in securing \$1.7M for the statewide Swim Lesson Voucher Program and \$100M for the AIDs Drug Assistance Program

Orlando, FL - Upon returning home from a special legislative session on the state budget, **Senator Carlos Guillermo Smith (D-Orlando)** announced millions in funding secured in the [2026-2027 budget](#) for hardworking Central Florida families, non-profits, municipalities, and arts organizations. This year's budget building process culminated in a special legislative session where legislators ultimately crafted a \$114.5 billion budget, which cut spending by one half billion compared to the adjusted total budget for FY 2025-2026.

Despite these major spending cuts, Senator Smith successfully championed and received funding approval for **sixteen local projects** totaling **\$8,498,500** in Central Florida and played a direct role in securing \$1.7 million in funding for the state's [Swim Lesson Voucher Program](#) offered to low income families and gives priority to families with autistic children and to active military families.

Subject to approval or line-item veto by the Governor, Senator Smith's funded projects include the following:

- **\$150,000 – Alianza Center's Summer, Cameras, Action! Youth Summer Leadership Experience:** An affordable student community engagement initiative to educate and empower community members of their civic responsibility and encourage participation.
- **\$127,000 – Skate Bud:** Pilot Program to research the return on investment in supporting the construction of an indoor Olympic Skate Park and investments in public skate parks in 5 Orlando locations.
- **\$350,000 – Belle Isle Police Department Emergency Response Equipment Upgrade :** To replace two aging marine patrol vessels and acquire one side-by-side utility vehicle to enhance emergency response and waterway safety operations on the Conway Chain of Lakes. These assets will improve patrol efficiency, expand search and rescue capabilities, and strengthen disaster response readiness.
- **\$200,000 – Samaritan Resource Center East Orange Opportunity Pathway:** To address two critical needs by helping individuals experiencing homelessness gain employment and stability while also addressing unfilled, higher-wage job openings in our region through providing skills training, upskilling, housing assistance, job placement, and case management services.
- **\$400,000 – SCORE Florida:** To support entrepreneurs business programs, through customer relationship management systems, volunteering mentors, and general operational expenses.
- **\$500,000 - Greater Malibu Groves Home Repair Program:** This program will eliminate hazardous and substandard housing conditions affecting low- to moderate-income homeowners facing

economic hardship. Program funding will be used to rehabilitate homes over 59 years old through essential improvements such as electrical, HVAC, and ADA-compliant upgrades,

- **\$450,000 - The Autism Theatre Project:** To support three professionally produced episodes of "The Voice Inside" based on true success stories from people of all abilities, six community events, and college/university screenings. The project provides youth with mental health education, disability awareness, and role models for resilience through educational entertainment.
- **\$225,000 - Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico-Orlando:** To provide financial assistance and comprehensive academic support services to eligible students pursuing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) degrees.
- **\$99,000 - Colonial High School Flight Academy:** Funding the addition of FAA-certified flight simulators and the expertise of a CFII-certified flight instructor, this will offer students the opportunity to complete their FAA Private Pilot Certificate while still in high school.
- **\$127,000 - Conserving Urban Agriculture:** To provide direct services to residents including free tree and plant distributions, hands-on training in sustainable landscaping, and educational workshops on water conservation and native plant care.
- **\$100,000 - Latin Community Advisors Inc:** A financial literacy program designed to mitigate financial risk and dependence on public assistance for at-risk populations in Orange County.
- **\$250,000 - Yeshua El Pan De Vida, Inc. Community Drainage and Flood Mitigation Project:** For the completion of a drainage and flood mitigation project that will address ongoing flooding on Synagogue property and at nearby homes in the Azalea Park community.
- **\$200,000 - Orlando Community & Youth Trust:** To fund the Senior Enrichment and Wellness Program which enhances senior health, social engagement, and accessibility by funding fitness classes, enrichment trips, sports leagues, and workshops on technology, finance, and arts.
- **\$170,000 - The Desire Foundation, Inc.:** to combat food insecurity, improve nutrition access, and support underserved families; particularly those living in Central Florida's food deserts. Through hands-on programs, community partnerships, and a volunteer-driven model, the foundation provides nutritious food and essential resources to individuals facing systemic barriers.
- **\$150,000 - She's Thankful, Inc:** To support Healing and Empowerment Circles that provide structured, trauma-informed sessions each month for survivors of sexual trauma across Central Florida.
- **\$5,000,000 - University of Central Florida:** To provide for The Workforce Entrepreneurship Resource eXchange facility and its programs designed to expand workforce readiness, drive entrepreneurship, and accelerate partnerships that meet the state's high-demand talent needs

Senator Smith offered the following statements:

"I'm proud of the work we did this session to successfully secure funding for 16 local projects to improve the lives of hardworking families in Central Florida. From support for workforce development programs, to combating food insecurity and deserts, and swimming lessons to prevent child drowning, we prioritized the needs of local underserved communities. We secured resources for stormwater infrastructure, public safety, and programs to improve financial literacy. We are grateful to Senate leadership for their support of these community initiatives that will have a major impact on the people of Senate District 17."

Senator Smith also played a vital role in the successful push for the legislature to provide emergency funding for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP).

"This session, I worked closely with President Albritton, advocates, and a bi-partisan group of lawmakers to address the growing health crisis caused by the Department of Health's draconian cuts to the AIDS Drug Assistance Program. This budget sustains access to life-saving HIV medications for 17,500

Floridians through the next fiscal year, reverses harmful formulary restrictions, and ensures the department's cooperation as we seek additional solutions to strengthen the program. Floridians living with HIV should never be forced to wonder whether their medication will disappear because of bureaucratic failures or political decisions. Access to treatment is a matter of life and death, and we have a responsibility to build a long-term solution that is transparent, financially sustainable, and centered on patient care."

The finalized state budget now moves to the Governor's desk for its final review and approval before the beginning of the new fiscal year on July 1.

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