

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Senator Carlos Guillermo Smith Secures \$10 Million+ In State Budget For Central Florida Families, Nonprofits, and Municipalities**

*Smith's leadership was also instrumental in securing \$19.8M in statewide arts funding*

**Orlando, FL** - Finally returning home this week from an extended 105-day 2025 legislative session, **Senator Carlos Guillermo Smith (D-Orlando)** announced millions in funding secured in the 2025-2026 state budget for hardworking Central Florida families, non-profits, municipalities, and arts organizations. This year's budget building process extended for weeks past the usual 60-day Florida legislative session and legislators ultimately crafted a \$115.1 billion budget, which cut spending \$3.5 billion compared to the adjusted total budget for FY 2024-2025.

Despite these major spending cuts, Senator Smith successfully championed and received funding approval for **thirteen local projects** totaling **\$10,719,321** in Central Florida and played a direct role in securing \$19.8 million in funding for 650 arts organizations for general program support statewide.

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

- **\$75,000 – 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.
- **\$267,000 – Skate Link:** A mentorship-based public works program creating safe access to small-scale skate spaces that foster youth engagement, community connection, and personal and professional growth.
- **\$394,321 – Orlando Pulse National Memorial:** For the planning, design and construction of a permanent memorial, creating a space for victim's families, survivors, first responders and the Orlando community to honor, unite and remember this pivotal moment in our city and state history.
- **\$800,000 – Belle Isle Municipal Facility Land Planning and Building Design:** To support the construction of a municipal facility to house the Police Department, City Hall, and Public Works—centralizing city services to improve efficiency and better serve the residents of Belle Isle.
- **\$200,000 – Samaritan Resource Center Pathways to Prosperity Program:** To support a workforce development program providing skills training, housing assistance, and job placement to help individuals transition from homelessness to stability while addressing workforce gaps and strengthening the local economy.
- **\$75,000 – Mustard Seed of Central Florida's Furnishing Basic Stability For Families:** This program provides essential furniture and case-managed support to families emerging from homelessness, personal tragedy, or natural disaster as they transition into stable housing.
- **\$113,000 – Conserving Resources, Growing Opportunity:** To support expansions to the City of Orlando's Nursery education program and its stormwater maintenance infrastructure, promoting native plant propagation, and sustainable landscaping for Orlando residents.

- **\$7,500,000 – Orange County Wedgefield Water & Wastewater System Improvements:** Subsequent to acquisition of the private utility that serves the Wedgefield subdivision in East Orange County, the County will initiate capital improvements to the existing water reclamation facility, water treatment facility, wastewater collection system, and water distribution system to address deferred maintenance issues and citizen concerns about water quality, pricing, and customer service.
- **\$195,000 – Keeping Up Out-of-School Suspension Program:** A transitional education initiative that keeps suspended students academically engaged through after-school peer-to-peer instruction focused on leadership, and personal and professional development. *Sponsored by Senator Smith on behalf of the late Senator Geraldine F. Thompson.*
- **\$300,000 – Children’s Safety Village Safe Swim Program:** An effort to combat preventable child drowning rates in Florida through affordable, six-week one-on-one swim lessons for children in marginalized and underserved communities.
- **\$150,000 - Donor Human Milk for Babies at Home Mothers’ Milk Bank of Florida:** To expand this program supporting mothers with medically fragile infants to meet their nutritional needs.
- **\$500,000 – 26Health’s Street Medicine Initiative:** Offering HIV/STI screenings, wellness exams, counseling, and substance misuse treatment to improve health and access to care directly in communities with the greatest need.
- **\$150,000 – Bettercare for Healthcare:** For the purchase and upgrades of 26Health's medical equipment, providing for an ultrasound machine, six exam beds, an EKG machine, and a mammogram machine.

Senator Smith offered the following statements:

*“I’m proud of the work we did this session to successfully secure funding for 13 local projects to improve the lives of hardworking families in Central Florida. From workforce development for the homeless, to essential furniture for displaced families, and swimming lessons to prevent child drowning, we prioritized the needs of local underserved communities. We secured resources for stormwater infrastructure, HIV prevention, and child nutrition. And we gained legislative approval for \$7.5 million in infrastructure improvements and water treatment upgrades to address the Wedgefield water crisis. 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 continued his years-long advocacy for statewide funding of the arts, especially the Cultural and Museum General Program Support grant program.

*“This session, I worked closely with President Albritton and Senate leadership on their proposal to fund 100% of the state’s recommended list of 184 organizations. The Senate held firm and prevailed during negotiations to secure full funding at \$18,325,297 for the recommended list, and even set aside an extra \$1.5 million for an additional 466 organizations who earned passing scores in their rigorous application to the state. This funding represents a major turnaround and improvement over last year’s devastating cuts and is a promising indication of future legislative support for the arts.”*

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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