By the Committee on Community Affairs; and Senator Gruters

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to Florida Building Code enforcement; amending s. 553.80, F.S.; prohibiting a local government from carrying forward more than a specified amount of unexpended revenue; defining the term “operating budget”; providing an exception; revising requirements for the expenditure of certain unexpended revenue; expanding the list of activities that are prohibited from being funded by fees adopted for enforcing the Florida Building Code; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Subsection (7) of section 553.80, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

(7) The governing bodies of local governments may provide a schedule of reasonable fees, as authorized by s. 125.56(2) or s. 166.222 and this section, for enforcing this part. These fees, and any fines or investment earnings related to the fees, shall be used solely for carrying out the local government’s responsibilities in enforcing the Florida Building Code. When providing a schedule of reasonable fees, the total estimated annual revenue derived from fees, and the fines and investment earnings related to the fees, may not exceed the total estimated annual costs of allowable activities. Any unexpended balances shall be carried forward to future years for allowable activities or shall be refunded at the discretion of the local government.
government. A local government may not carry forward an amount exceeding the average of its operating budget for enforcing the Florida Building Code for the previous 4 fiscal years. For purposes of this subsection, the term “operating budget” does not include reserve amounts. Any amount exceeding this limit must be used as authorized in subparagraph (a)(2). However, a local government which established, as of January 1, 2019, a Building Inspections Fund Advisory Board consisting of five members from the construction stakeholder community and carries an unexpended balance in excess of the average of its operating budget for the previous 4 fiscal years may continue to carry such excess funds forward upon the recommendation of the advisory board. The basis for a fee structure for allowable activities shall relate to the level of service provided by the local government and shall include consideration for refunding fees due to reduced services based on services provided as prescribed by s. 553.791, but not provided by the local government. Fees charged shall be consistently applied.

(a)(1) As used in this subsection, the phrase “enforcing the Florida Building Code” includes the direct costs and reasonable indirect costs associated with review of building plans, building inspections, reinspections, and building permit processing; building code enforcement; and fire inspections associated with new construction. The phrase may also include training costs associated with the enforcement of the Florida Building Code and enforcement action pertaining to unlicensed contractor activity to the extent not funded by other user fees.

2. A local government must use any excess funds that it is prohibited from carrying forward to rebate and reduce fees.
(b) The following activities may not be funded with fees adopted for enforcing the Florida Building Code:

1. Planning and zoning or other general government activities.
2. Inspections of public buildings for a reduced fee or no fee.
3. Public information requests, community functions, boards, and any program not directly related to enforcement of the Florida Building Code.
4. Enforcement and implementation of any other local ordinance, excluding validly adopted local amendments to the Florida Building Code and excluding any local ordinance directly related to enforcing the Florida Building Code as defined in paragraph (a).
5. Charging surcharges or other similar fees not directly related to enforcing the Florida Building Code.

(c) A local government shall use recognized management, accounting, and oversight practices to ensure that fees, fines, and investment earnings generated under this subsection are maintained and allocated or used solely for the purposes described in paragraph (a).

(d) The local enforcement agency, independent district, or special district may not require at any time, including at the time of application for a permit, the payment of any additional fees, charges, or expenses associated with:

1. Providing proof of licensure pursuant to chapter 489;
2. Recording or filing a license issued pursuant to this chapter; or
3. Providing, recording, or filing evidence of workers’
compensation insurance coverage as required by chapter 440.

Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2019.