By Senator Rodriguez

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A bill to be entitled An act relating to Resiliency Energy Environment Florida programs; amending s. 163.08, F.S.; defining terms; providing that a property owner may apply to a Resiliency Energy Environment Florida (REEF) program for funding to finance a qualifying improvement and may enter into an assessment financing agreement with a local government; providing that REEF program costs may be collected as non-ad valorem assessments; authorizing local governments to enter into agreements with program administrators to administer REEF programs; revising and specifying public recording requirements for assessment financing agreements and notices of lien; revising requirements that apply to local governments or program administrators in determining eligibility for assessment financing; revising requirements for qualifying improvements; revising and specifying limitations on non-ad valorem assessments; providing construction; specifying underwriting, financing estimate, disclosure, and confirmation requirements for program administrators relating to residential real property; authorizing a residential real property owner, under certain circumstances and within a certain timeframe, to cancel an assessment financing agreement without financial penalty; specifying limitations on assessment financing agreement terms for residential real property; prohibiting certain financing terms for residential real property; specifying requirements

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for, and certain prohibited acts by, program administrators relating to assessment financing agreements and contractors for qualifying improvements to residential real property; specifying additional annual reporting requirements for program administrators; specifying requirements for, and limitations on, assessment financing agreements relating to government-leased property; providing construction and applicability; conforming provisions to changes made by the act; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Present subsection (16) of section 163.08, Florida Statutes, is redesignated as subsection (33), a new subsection (16) and subsections (17) through (32) are added to that section, and subsections (1), (2), (4), (6) through (10), (12), (13), and (14) of that section are amended, to read:

 163.08 Supplemental authority for improvements to real property.—

(1) (a) In chapter 2008-227, Laws of Florida, the Legislature amended the energy goal of the state comprehensive plan to provide, in part, that the state shall reduce its energy requirements through enhanced conservation and efficiency measures in all end-use sectors and reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide by promoting an increased use of renewable energy resources. That act also declared it the public policy of the state to play a leading role in developing and instituting

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energy management programs that promote energy conservation, energy security, and the reduction of greenhouse gases. In addition to establishing policies to promote the use of renewable energy, the Legislature provided for a schedule of increases in energy performance of buildings subject to the Florida Energy Efficiency Code for Building Construction. In chapter 2008-191, Laws of Florida, the Legislature adopted new energy conservation and greenhouse gas reduction comprehensive planning requirements for local governments. In the 2008 general election, the voters of this state approved a constitutional amendment authorizing the Legislature, by general law, to prohibit consideration of any change or improvement made for the purpose of improving a property's resistance to wind damage or the installation of a renewable energy source device in the determination of the assessed value of residential real property.

(b) The Legislature finds that all energy-consumingimproved properties that are not using energy conservation
strategies contribute to the burden affecting all improved
property resulting from fossil fuel energy production. Improved
property that has been retrofitted with energy-related
qualifying improvements receives the special benefit of
alleviating the property's burden from energy consumption. All
improved properties not protected from wind damage by wind
resistance qualifying improvements contribute to the burden
affecting all improved property resulting from potential wind
damage. Improved property that has been retrofitted with wind
resistance qualifying improvements receives the special benefit
of reducing the property's burden from potential wind damage.

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Further, the installation and operation of qualifying improvements not only benefit the affected properties for which the improvements are made, but also assist in fulfilling the goals of the state's energy and hurricane mitigation policies.

- (c) In order to make qualifying improvements more affordable and assist property owners who wish to undertake such improvements, the Legislature finds that there is a compelling state interest in enabling property owners to voluntarily finance such improvements with local government assistance.
- (d) (e) The Legislature determines that the actions authorized under this section, including, but not limited to, the financing of qualifying improvements through the execution of <u>assessment</u> financing agreements and the related imposition of voluntary assessments, are reasonable and necessary to serve and achieve a compelling state interest and are necessary for the prosperity and welfare of the state and its property owners and inhabitants.
 - (2) As used in this section, the term:
- (a) "Assessment financing agreement" means the financing agreement under a REEF program between a local government and a property owner for the acquisition or installation of qualifying improvements.
- (b) "Contractor" means an independent contractor who contracts with a property owner to install qualifying improvements on real property but who is not the owner of such property.
- (c) "Government-leased property" means real property owned by a local government which has become subject to taxation due to lease of the property to a nongovernmental lessee.

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(d) (a) "Local government" means a county, a municipality, a dependent special district as defined in s. 189.012, or a separate legal entity created pursuant to s. 163.01(7).

- (e) "Non-ad valorem assessment" or "assessment" has the same meaning as the term "non-ad valorem assessment" as defined in s. 197.3632(1).
- (f) "Nongovernmental lessee" means a person or an entity, other than a local government, which is the lessee of government-leased property.
- (g) "Nonresidential real property" means any property not defined as residential real property and which will be or has been improved by a qualifying improvement. The term includes, but is not limited to, the following:
- 1. Multifamily residential property composed of five or more dwelling units.
 - 2. Office property.
 - 3. Commercial real property.
 - 4. Industrial property.
 - 5. Agricultural property.
 - 6. Government-leased property.
- (h) "Program administrator" means an entity, including, but not limited to, a for-profit or not-for-profit entity, with which a local government contracts to administer a REEF program.
 - (i) (b) "Qualifying improvement" includes any:
- 1. Energy conservation and efficiency improvement, which is a measure to reduce consumption through conservation or a more efficient use of electricity, natural gas, propane, or other forms of energy on the property, including, but not limited to, air sealing; installation of insulation; installation of energy-

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efficient heating, cooling, or ventilation systems; building modifications to increase the use of daylight; replacement of windows; installation of energy controls or energy recovery systems; installation of electric vehicle charging equipment; and installation of efficient lighting equipment.

- 2. Renewable energy improvement, which is the installation of any system in which the electrical, mechanical, or thermal energy is produced from a method that uses one or more of the following fuels or energy sources: hydrogen, solar energy, geothermal energy, bioenergy, and wind energy.
- 3. Wind resistance improvement, which includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Improving the strength of the roof deck attachment;
- b. Creating a secondary water barrier to prevent water intrusion;
 - c. Installing wind-resistant shingles;
 - d. Installing gable-end bracing;
 - e. Reinforcing roof-to-wall connections;
 - f. Installing storm shutters; or
 - g. Installing opening protections.
- (j) "Residential real property" means a residential real property composed of four or fewer dwelling units which is or will be improved by a qualifying improvement.
- (k) "Resiliency Energy Environment Florida (REEF) program"
 means a program established by a local government, alone or in
 partnership with other local governments or a program
 administrator, to finance qualifying improvements on
 nonresidential real property or residential real property.
 - (4) Subject to local government ordinance or resolution, a

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property owner may apply to the REEF program local government for funding to finance a qualifying improvement and enter into an assessment a financing agreement with the local government. Costs incurred by the REEF program local government for such purpose may be collected as a non-ad valorem assessment. A nonad valorem assessment shall be collected pursuant to s. 197.3632 and, notwithstanding s. 197.3632(8)(a), shall not be subject to discount for early payment. However, the notice and adoption requirements of s. 197.3632(4) do not apply if this section is used and complied with, and the intent resolution, publication of notice, and mailed notices to the property appraiser, tax collector, and Department of Revenue required by s. 197.3632(3)(a) may be provided on or before August 15 in conjunction with any non-ad valorem assessment authorized by this section, if the property appraiser, tax collector, and local government agree.

- (6) A local government may enter into an agreement with a program administrator to administer a REEF program A qualifying improvement program may be administered by a for-profit entity or a not-for-profit organization on behalf of and at the discretion of the local government.
- (7) A local government may incur debt for the purpose of providing <u>financing for qualifying such</u> improvements, <u>which debt is</u> payable from revenues received from the improved property, or <u>from</u> any other available revenue source authorized <u>under this</u> section or by other law.
- (8) A local government may enter into $\underline{\text{an assessment}}$ $\underline{\text{a}}$ financing agreement $\underline{\text{to finance or refinance a qualifying}}$ improvement only with the record owner of the affected property.

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Any <u>assessment</u> financing agreement entered into pursuant to this section or a summary memorandum of such agreement shall be <u>submitted for recording recorded</u> in the public records of the county within which the property is located by the sponsoring unit of local government within 5 days after execution of the agreement. The recorded agreement shall provide constructive notice that the assessment to be levied on the property constitutes a lien of equal dignity to county taxes and assessments from the date of recordation. A notice of lien for the full amount of the financing may be recorded in the public records of the county where the property is located. Such lien shall not be enforceable in a manner that results in the acceleration of the remaining nondelinquent unpaid balance under the assessment financing agreement.

- (9) Before entering into <u>an assessment</u> a financing agreement, the local government, or the program administrator acting on its behalf, shall reasonably determine that:
- (a) All property taxes and any other assessments levied on the same bill as property taxes are <u>current</u> paid and have not been delinquent <u>for more than 30 days</u> for the preceding 3 years or the property owner's period of ownership, whichever is less;
- (b) that There are no involuntary liens greater than \$1,000, including, but not limited to, construction liens on the property;
- (c) that No notices of default or other evidence of property-based debt delinquency have been recorded and not released during the preceding 3 years or the property owner's period of ownership, whichever is less;
 - (d) The local government or program administrator has asked

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the property owner whether any other assessments under this section have been recorded or have been funded and not yet recorded on the property. The failure of a property owner to disclose information set forth in this paragraph does not invalidate an assessment financing agreement or any obligation thereunder, even if the total financed amount of the qualifying improvements exceeds the amount that would otherwise be authorized under paragraph (12)(a);

- (e) and that The property owner is current on all mortgage debt on the property; and
- (f) If the property is residential real property, it is not subject to an existing home equity conversion mortgage or reverse mortgage product or is not currently a residential property gifted to a homeowner by a nonprofit entity.
- (10) Before final funding may be provided, a qualifying improvement <u>must shall</u> be affixed <u>or planned to be affixed</u> to a nonresidential real property or residential real <u>building or facility that is part of the property and constitutes shall constitute</u> an improvement to <u>that property the building or facility</u>. An assessment financing agreement <u>may between a local government and a qualifying property owner may not cover qualifying wind-resistance</u> improvements <u>on nonresidential real property or residential real property in buildings or facilities under new construction or construction for which a certificate of occupancy or similar evidence of substantial completion of new construction or improvement has not been issued.</u>
- (12) (a) Without the consent of the holders or loan servicers of any mortgage encumbering or otherwise secured by

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the property, the total amount of any non-ad valorem assessment for a property under this section may not exceed 20 percent of the <u>fair market just</u> value of the <u>real</u> property <u>as determined by the county property appraiser</u>. The combined mortgage-related debt and total amount of any non-ad valorem assessments funded under this section for residential real property may not exceed 100 percent of the fair market value of the residential real property. However, the failure of a property owner to disclose information set forth in paragraph (9) (d) does not invalidate an assessment financing agreement or any obligation thereunder, even if the total financed amount of the qualifying improvements exceeds the amount that would otherwise be authorized under this paragraph.

- (b) Notwithstanding paragraph (a), a non-ad valorem assessment for a qualifying improvement defined in subparagraph (2)(i)1. (2)(b)1. or subparagraph (2)(i)2. which (2)(b)2. that is supported by an energy audit is not subject to the limits in this subsection if the audit demonstrates that the annual energy savings from the qualified improvement equals or exceeds the annual repayment amount of the non-ad valorem assessment.
- (13) At least 30 days before entering into an assessment a financing agreement, the property owner shall provide to the holders or loan servicers of any existing mortgages encumbering or otherwise secured by the property a notice of the owner's intent to enter into an assessment a financing agreement together with the maximum principal amount to be financed and the maximum annual assessment necessary to repay that amount. A verified copy or other proof of such notice shall be provided to the local government or program administrator. A provision in

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any agreement between a mortgagee or other lienholder and a property owner, or otherwise now or hereafter binding upon a property owner, which allows for acceleration of payment of the mortgage, note, or lien or other unilateral modification solely as a result of entering into an assessment a financing agreement as provided for in this section is not enforceable. This subsection does not limit the authority of the holder or loan servicer to increase the required monthly escrow by an amount necessary to annually pay the annual qualifying improvement assessment.

(14) At or before the time a <u>seller purchaser</u> executes a contract for the sale and purchase of any property for which a non-ad valorem assessment has been levied under this section and has an unpaid balance due, the seller <u>must shall</u> give the prospective purchaser a written disclosure statement in the following form, which shall be set forth in the contract or in a separate writing:

QUALIFYING IMPROVEMENTS FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY,
RENEWABLE ENERGY, OR WIND RESISTANCE.—The property
being purchased is located within the jurisdiction of
a local government that has placed an assessment on
the property pursuant to s. 163.08, Florida Statutes.
The assessment is for a qualifying improvement to the
property relating to energy efficiency, renewable
energy, or wind resistance, and is not based on the
value of property. You are encouraged to contact the
county property appraiser's office to learn more about
this and other assessments that may be provided by

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(16) Before final approval of an assessment financing agreement for a qualifying improvement on a residential real property, a program administrator shall reasonably determine that the property owner has the ability to pay the estimated annual assessment. To do so, the program administrator shall, at a minimum, use the underwriting requirements in subsection (9), confirm that the property owner is not in bankruptcy, and determine that the total estimated annual payment amount for all assessment financing agreements funded under this section on the property does not exceed 10 percent of the property owner's annual household income. Income may be confirmed using information gathered from reputable third parties that provide reasonably reliable evidence of the property owner's household income. Income may not be confirmed solely by a property owner's statement. The failure of a property owner to disclose information set forth in paragraph (9)(d) does not invalidate an assessment financing agreement or any obligation thereunder, even if the total estimated annual payment amount exceeds the amount that would otherwise be authorized under this subsection.

- (17) Prior to or contemporaneously with a property owner signing an assessment financing agreement on a residential real property, the program administrator shall provide a financing estimate and disclosure to the residential real property owner which includes all of the following:
- (a) The total amount estimated to be funded, including the cost of the qualifying improvements, program fees, and capitalized interest, if any.

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(b) The estimated annual assessment.

- (c) The term of the assessment.
- (d) The interest charged and estimated annual percentage rate.
 - (e) A description of the qualifying improvement.
- (f) A disclosure that if the property owner sells or refinances the property, the property owner, as a condition of the sale or the refinance, may be required by a mortgage lender to pay off the full amount owed under each assessment financing agreement.
- (g) A disclosure that the assessment will be collected along with the property owner's property taxes and will result in a lien on the property from the date the assessment financing agreement is recorded.
- (h) A disclosure that failure to pay the assessment may result in penalties and fees, along with the issuance of a tax certificate that could result in the property owner losing the real property.
- (18) Before a notice to proceed is issued on residential real property, the program administrator shall conduct with the residential real property owner or an authorized representative an oral, recorded telephone call during which the program administrator shall use plain language. The program administrator shall ask the residential real property owner if he or she would like to communicate primarily in a language other than English. A program administrator may not leave a voicemail to the residential real property owner to satisfy this requirement. A program administrator, as part of such telephone call, shall confirm all of the following with the residential

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real property owner:

- (a) That at least one residential real property owner has access to a copy of the assessment financing agreement and financing estimates and disclosures.
 - (b) The qualifying improvements being financed.
- (c) The total estimated annual costs that the residential real property owner will have to pay under the assessment financing agreement, including applicable fees.
- (d) The total estimated average monthly equivalent amount of funds the residential real property owner would have to save in order to pay the annual costs of the assessment, including applicable fees.
- (e) The estimated date the residential real property owner's first property tax payment that includes the assessment will be due.
 - (f) The term of the assessment financing agreement.
- (g) That payments for the assessment financing agreement will cause the residential real property owner's annual property tax bill to increase, and that payments will be made through an additional annual assessment on the property and either will be paid directly to the county tax collector's office as part of the total annual secured property tax bill or may be paid through the residential real property owner's mortgage escrow account.
- (h) That the residential real property owner has disclosed whether the property has received, or the owner is seeking, additional assessments funded under this section and that the owner has disclosed all other assessments funded under this section which are or are about to be placed on the property.

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(i) That the property will be subject to a lien during the term of the assessment financing agreement and that the obligations under the agreement may be required to be paid in full before the residential real property owner sells or refinances the property.

- (j) That any potential utility or insurance savings are not guaranteed and will not reduce the assessment or total assessment amount.
- (k) That the program administrator does not provide tax advice, and the residential real property owner should seek professional tax advice if he or she has questions regarding tax credits, tax deductibility, or other tax impacts of the qualifying improvement or the assessment financing agreement.
- (19) A residential real property owner may cancel an assessment financing agreement within 3 business days after signing the assessment financing agreement without any financial penalty for doing so.
- (20) The term of an assessment financing agreement on residential real property may not exceed:
 - (a) Thirty years; or
- (b) Either the weighted average estimated useful life of all qualifying improvements being financed or the estimated useful life of the qualifying improvements to which the greatest portion of funds is disbursed.
- (21) An assessment financing agreement authorized under this section on residential real property may not include any of the following financing terms:
 - (a) A negative amortization schedule.
 - (b) A balloon payment.

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(c) Prepayment fees, other than nominal administrative costs.

- (22) For residential real property, a program administrator:
- (a) May not enroll a contractor who contracts with residential real property owners to install qualifying improvements unless:
- 1. The program administrator makes a reasonable effort to determine that the contractor maintains in good standing an appropriate license from the state, if applicable, as well as any other permit, license, or registration required for engaging in business in the jurisdiction in which he or she operates and that the contractor maintains all state-required bond and insurance coverage; and
- 2. The program administrator obtains the contractor's written agreement that the contractor will act in accordance with all applicable laws, including applicable advertising and marketing laws and regulations.
- (b) Shall maintain a process to enroll new contractors which includes reasonable review of the following for each contractor:
 - 1. Relevant work or project history.
 - 2. Financial and reputational background checks.
- 3. A criminal background check. A program administrator may rely on a background check conducted by the Construction

 Industry Licensing Board within the Department of Business and Professional Regulation to comply with this requirement.
- 4. Status on the Better Business Bureau online platform or another online platform that tracks contractor reviews.

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(23) (a) Before disbursing funds to a contractor for a qualifying improvement on residential real property, a program administrator must first confirm that the applicable work or service has been completed, either through a written certification from the property owner, a recorded telephone call with the property owner, review of geo-stamped and time-stamped photographs, review of a final permit, or a site inspection through third-party means.

- (b) A program administrator may not disclose to a contractor or to a third party engaged in soliciting an assessment financing agreement the maximum financing amount for which a residential real property owner is eligible.
- (24) A program administrator shall comply with the following marketing and communications guidelines when communicating with residential real property owners:
 - (a) A program administrator may not represent:
- 1. That the REEF program or assessment financing is a government assistance program;
- 2. That qualifying improvements are free or that assessment financing is a free program; or
- 3. That the financing of a qualifying improvement using the REEF program does not require the property owner to repay the financial obligation.
- (b) A program administrator may not make any representation as to the tax deductibility of an assessment authorized under this section. A program administrator or contractor may encourage a property owner to seek the advice of a tax professional regarding tax matters related to assessments.
 - (25) A contractor should not present a higher price for a

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qualifying improvement on residential real property financed by an assessment financing agreement than the contractor would otherwise reasonably present if the qualifying improvement was not being financed through an assessment financing agreement.

- (26) A program administrator shall use appropriate methodologies or technologies to identify and verify the identity of the residential real property owners who execute an assessment financing agreement.
- (27) A program administrator may not provide a contractor with any payment, fee, or kickback in exchange for referring assessment financing business relating to a specific assessment financing agreement.
- (28) A program administrator shall develop and implement policies and procedures for responding, tracking, and timely helping to resolve questions and property owner complaints as soon as reasonably practicable.
- (29) A program administrator shall maintain a process for monitoring contractors that contract with residential real property owners to install qualifying improvements with regard to performance and compliance with program policies and shall implement policies for suspending and terminating contractors based on violations of program policies or unscrupulous behavior. A program administrator shall maintain a policy for determining the conditions on which a contractor may be reinstated to the program.
- (30) A program administrator shall provide, at a reasonable time following the end of the prior calendar year, an annual report to the dependent special district as defined in s.

 189.012 or a separate legal entity created pursuant to s.

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523 163.01(7) which it has contracted with to administer a REEF
524 program and shall include information and data related to the
525 following:

- (a) The total number of property owner complaints received which are associated with project funding in the report year.
- (b) Of the total number of complaints received associated with project funding in the report year:
- 1. The number and percentage of complaints that relate to the assessment financing.
- 2. The number and percentage of complaints that relate to a contractor or the workmanship of a contractor and are not related to assessment financing.
- 3. The number and percentage of complaints that relate to both a contractor and the assessment financing.
- 4. The number and percentage of complaints identified in subparagraphs 1., 2., and 3. which were resolved and the number and percentage of complaints that were not resolved.
- (c) The percentage of complaints in subparagraphs (b)1., 2., and 3. expressed as a total of all projects funded in the report year.
- (31) Notwithstanding any provision of this section to the contrary, the following applies to government-leased property:
- (a) The assessment financing agreement must be executed by either:
 - 1. The local government and the nongovernmental lessee; or
- 2. Solely by the nongovernmental lessee but with the written consent of the local government. Evidence of such consent must be provided to the program administrator or REEF program.

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(b) The assessment financing agreement must provide that the nongovernmental lessee is the only party obligated to pay the assessment.

- (c) A delinquent assessment must be enforced in the manner provided in ss. 196.199(8) and 197.432(10).
- (d) The recorded assessment financing agreement, or a summary memorandum of such recorded agreement, must provide constructive notice that the assessment to be levied on the property is subject to enforcement in the manner provided in ss. 196.199(8) and 197.432(10).
- (e) For purposes of subsections (9) and (13) only, references to the property owner are deemed to refer to the nongovernmental lessee and references to the period of ownership are deemed to refer to the period that the nongovernmental lessee has been leasing the property from the local government.
- (f) The term of the assessment financing agreement on government-leased property may not exceed:
 - 1. Thirty years;
- 2. The remaining term of the lease on the government-leased property; or
- 3. Either the weighted average estimated useful life of all qualifying improvements being financed or the estimated useful life of the qualifying improvements to which the greatest portion of funds is disbursed.
- (32) (a) Subsections (16) through (30) do not apply to residential real property if the program administrator reasonably determines that:
- 1. The residential real property is owned by a business entity that owns more than four residential real properties; and

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2. The business entity's managing member, partner, or beneficial owner does not reside in the residential real property.

(b) Subsections (16) through (30) apply to a program administrator only when administering a REEF program for qualifying improvements on residential real property.

Subsections (16) through (30) do not apply with respect to a local government or to nonresidential real property.

Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2022.