

By Senator Simon

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A bill to be entitled

An act relating to rural communities; reenacting and amending s. 20.60, F.S.; revising the list of divisions and offices within the Department of Commerce to conform to changes made by the act; revising the annual program reports that must be included in the annual report of the Department of Commerce; amending s. 163.3168, F.S.; requiring the state land planning agency to give preference for technical assistance funding to local governments located in a rural area of opportunity; requiring the agency to consult with the Office of Rural Prosperity when awarding certain funding; amending s. 201.15, F.S.; requiring that a certain sum be paid to the credit of the State Transportation Trust Fund for the exclusive use of the Florida Arterial Road Modernization Program; amending s. 202.18, F.S.; redirecting the transfer of certain communication services tax proceeds; amending s. 212.20, F.S.; revising the distribution of sales and use tax revenue to include a transfer to fiscally constrained counties; amending s. 215.971, F.S.; providing construction regarding agreements funded with federal or state assistance; requiring a state agency to expedite payment requests from a county, municipality, or rural area of opportunity for a specified purpose; requiring each state agency to report to the Office of Rural Prosperity by a certain date with a summary of certain information; requiring the office to summarize

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the information it receives for its annual report;
amending s. 218.67, F.S.; revising the conditions
required for a county to be considered a fiscally
constrained county; authorizing eligible counties to
receive a distribution of sales and use tax revenue;
revising the sources that the Department of Revenue
must use to determine the amount distributed to
fiscally constrained counties; revising the factors
for allocation of the distribution of revenue to
fiscally constrained counties; requiring that the
computation and amount distributed be calculated using
certain methods; authorizing specified uses for the
revenue; conforming a cross-reference; amending s.
288.001, F.S.; requiring the Florida Small Business
Development Center Network to use certain funds
appropriated for a specified purpose; authorizing the
network to dedicate funds to facilitate certain
events; amending s. 288.007, F.S.; revising which
local governments and economic development
organizations seeking to recruit businesses are
required to submit a specified report; creating s.
288.013, F.S.; providing legislative findings;
creating the Office of Rural Prosperity within the
Department of Commerce; requiring the Governor to
appoint a director, subject to confirmation by the
Senate; providing that the director reports to and
serves at the pleasure of the secretary of the
department; providing the duties of the office;
requiring the office to establish by a specified date

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a certain number of regional rural community liaison centers across this state for a specified purpose; providing the powers, duties, and functions of the liaison centers; requiring each regional rural community liaison center, to the extent possible, to coordinate with certain entities; requiring the liaison centers to engage with the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI); requiring at least one staff member of a liaison center to attend the monthly REDI meetings in person or by means of electronic communication; requiring the director of the office to submit an annual report to the Administration Commission within the Executive Office of the Governor; specifying requirements for the annual report; requiring that the annual report also be submitted to the Legislature by a specified date and published on the office's website; requiring the director of the office to attend the next Administration Commission meeting to present detailed information from the annual report; requiring the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) to evaluate the effectiveness of the office and submit a report of its findings to the Legislature by a certain date annually until a specified date; requiring OPPAGA to submit its report the office at specified intervals; requiring OPPAGA to review certain strategies from other states; requiring OPPAGA to submit a report of its findings to the Legislature at certain intervals; creating s. 288.014,

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F.S.; providing legislative findings; requiring the Office of Rural Prosperity to administer the Renaissance Grants Program to provide block grants to eligible communities; requiring the Office of Economic and Demographic Research to certify to the Office of Rural Prosperity certain information by a specified date; defining the term "growth-impeded"; requiring the Office of Economic and Demographic Research to certify annually that a county remains growth-impeded until such county has positive population growth for a specified amount of time; providing that such county, after 3 consecutive years of population growth, is eligible to participate in the program for 1 additional year; requiring a county eligible for the program to enter into an agreement with the Office of Rural Prosperity in order to receive the block grant; giving such counties broad authority to design their specific plans; prohibiting the Office of Rural Prosperity from determining how such counties implement the block grant; requiring regional rural community liaison center staff to provide assistance, upon the county's request; requiring participating counties to report annually to the Office of Rural Prosperity with certain information; providing that a participating county receives a specified amount from funds appropriated to the program, or an equal share of the funds appropriated if the total of such appropriated funds is insufficient to provide that amount; requiring participating counties to make all

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attempts to limit the amount spent on administrative costs; authorizing participating counties to contribute other funds for block grant purposes; requiring participating counties to hire and retain a renaissance coordinator; providing that funds from the block grant may be used to hire the renaissance coordinator; providing the responsibilities of the renaissance coordinator; requiring the regional rural community liaison center staff to provide assistance and training to the renaissance coordinator, upon request; requiring participating counties to design a plan to make targeted investments to achieve population growth and increase economic vitality; specifying requirements for such plans; requiring participating counties to develop intergovernmental agreements with certain entities in order to implement the plan; requiring the Auditor General to conduct an operational audit every 2 years for a specified purpose; requiring the Office of Economic and Demographic Research to provide an annual report on a specified date of renaissance block grant recipients by county; specifying requirements for the annual report; requiring that the report be submitted to the Legislature; providing that funds appropriated from the program are not subject to reversion; providing for expiration; creating s. 288.0175, F.S.; creating the Public Infrastructure Smart Technology Grant Program within the Office of Rural Prosperity; defining terms; requiring the office to contract with

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one or more smart technology lead organizations to administer the grant program for a specified purpose; providing the criteria for such contracts; requiring that projects funded by the grant program be included in the office's annual report; amending s. 288.018, F.S.; requiring the office, rather than the Department of Commerce, to establish a grant program to provide funding for regional economic development organizations; revising who may apply for such grants; providing that a grant award may not exceed a certain amount in a year; providing exceptions to a provision that the department may expend a certain amount for a certain purpose; amending s. 288.019, F.S.; revising the program criteria and procedures that agencies and organizations of REDI are required to review; revising the list of impacts each REDI agency and organization must consider in its review; requiring REDI agencies and organizations to develop a proposal for modifications which minimizes the financial and resource impacts to a rural community; requiring that ranking of evaluation criteria and scoring procedures be used only when ranking is a component of the program; requiring that match requirements be waived or reduced for rural communities; providing that donations of land may be treated as in-kind matches; requiring each agency and organization that applies for or receives federal funding to request federal approval to waive or reduce the financial match requirements, if any, for projects in rural

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communities; requiring that proposals be submitted to the office, rather than the department; requiring each REDI agency and organization to modify rules or policies as necessary to reflect the finalized proposal; requiring that information about authorized waivers be included on the office's online rural resource directory; requiring the rural liaison from the related regional rural community liaison center districts to assist the rural community to make waiver or reduction requests; conforming a cross-reference; amending s. 288.021, F.S.; requiring, when practicable, the economic development liaison to serve as the agency representative for REDI; amending s. 288.065, F.S.; defining the term "unit of local government"; requiring the office to include in its annual report certain information about the Rural Community Development Revolving Loan Fund; conforming provisions to changes made by the act; amending s. 288.0655, F.S.; revising the list of grants that may be awarded by the office under the Rural Infrastructure Fund; deleting the authorization for local match requirements to be waived for a catalyst site; revising the list of departments the office must consult with to certify applicants; requiring the office to include certain information about the Rural Infrastructure Fund in its annual report; conforming provisions to changes made by the act; amending s. 288.0656, F.S.; revising legislative intent; providing legislative findings; providing that REDI is created

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within the Office of Rural Prosperity, rather than the department; deleting the definitions of the terms "catalyst project" and "catalyst site"; requiring that an alternate for each designated deputy secretary be a deputy secretary or higher-level staff person; requiring that the names of such alternates be reported to the director of the office; requiring at least one rural liaison to participate in REDI meetings; requiring REDI to meet at least each month; deleting a provision that a rural area of opportunity may designate catalyst projects; requiring REDI to submit a certain report to the office, rather than to the department; specifying requirements for such report; conforming provisions to changes made by the act; making technical changes; repealing s. 288.06561, F.S., relating to reduction or waiver of financial match requirements; amending s. 288.0657, F.S.; requiring the office, rather than the department, to provide grants to assist rural communities; providing that such grants may be used for specified purposes; requiring the rural liaison to assist those applying for such grants; providing that marketing grants may include certain funding; amending s. 288.1226, F.S.; revising required components of the 4-year marketing plan of the Florida Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation; repealing s. 288.12266, F.S., relating to the Targeted Marketing Assistance Program; amending s. 288.9961, F.S.; revising the definition of the term "underserved"; requiring the office to consult with

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regional rural community liaison centers on development and update of a certain strategic plan; requiring rural liaisons to assist rural communities with providing assistance in coordination with the regional rural community liaison centers; requiring the office to submit reports with specified information to the Governor and the Legislature within certain timeframes; repealing s. 290.06561, F.S., relating to designation of rural enterprise zones as catalyst sites; amending s. 319.32, F.S.; revising the disposition of fees collected for certain title certificates; amending s. 334.044, F.S.; revising the powers and duties of the Department of Transportation; amending s. 339.0801, F.S.; revising the allocation of funds received in the State Transportation Trust Fund; amending s. 339.2816, F.S.; requiring, rather than authorizing, that certain funds received from the State Transportation Trust Fund be used for the Small County Road Assistance Program; requiring the department to use other additional revenues for the Small County Road Assistance Program; providing an exception to the prohibition against funding capacity improvements on county roads; amending s. 339.2817, F.S.; revising the criteria that the Department of Transportation must consider for evaluating projects for County Incentive Grant Program assistance; requiring the department to give priority to counties located either wholly or partially within the Everglades Agricultural Area and which request a

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specified percentage of project costs for eligible projects; specifying a limitation on such requests; providing for future expiration; amending s. 339.2818, F.S.; deleting a provision that the funds allocated under the Small County Outreach Program are in addition to the Small County Road Assistance Program; deleting a provision that a local government within the Everglades Agricultural Area, the Peace River Basin, or the Suwannee River Basin may compete for additional funding; conforming provisions to changes made by the act; making a technical change; amending s. 339.68, F.S.; providing legislative findings; creating the Florida Arterial Road Modernization Program within the Department of Transportation; defining the term "rural community"; requiring the department to allocate from the State Transportation Trust Fund a minimum sum in each fiscal year to fund the program; providing that such funding is in addition to any other funding provided to the program; providing criteria the department must use to prioritize projects for funding under the program; requiring the department to submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature by a specified date; requiring that such report be submitted every 2 years thereafter; providing the criteria for such report; requiring the Department of Transportation to allocate additional funds to implement the Small County Road Assistance Program and amend the tentative work program for a specified number of fiscal years;

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requiring the department to submit a budget amendment before the adoption of the work program; requiring the department to allocate sufficient funds to implement the Florida Arterial Road Modernization Program; requiring the department to amend the current tentative work program for a specified number of fiscal years to include the program's projects; requiring the department to submit a budget amendment before the implementation of the program; requiring that the revenue increases in the State Transportation Trust Fund which are derived from the act be used to fund the work program; creating s. 341.0525, F.S.; creating a rural transit operating block grant program to be administered by the Department of Transportation; limiting rural transit block grant funds to certain public transit providers; requiring the annual allocation of certain funds from the State Transportation Trust Fund for the program; providing for the distribution of funds to each eligible public transit provider in at least a certain amount; providing authorized uses of grant funds; prohibiting state participation in certain costs above a specified percentage or amount; prohibiting an eligible provider from using block grant funds in a certain manner; providing an exception; prohibiting the state from giving a county more than a specified percentage of available funds or a certain amount; providing eligibility requirements; requiring an eligible provider to return funds under certain circumstances;

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authorizing the department to consult with an eligible provider before distributing funds to make a certain determination; requiring an eligible provider to repay to the department funds expended on unauthorized uses if revealed in an audit; requiring the department to redistribute returned and repaid funds to other eligible providers; amending s. 381.402, F.S.; revising eligibility requirements for the Florida Reimbursement Assistance for Medical Education Program; revising the proof required to make payments for participation in the program; creating s. 381.403, F.S.; providing legislative findings; creating the Rural Access to Primary and Preventive Care Grant Program within the Department of Health for a specified purpose; defining terms; requiring the department to award grants under the program to physicians, physician assistants, and autonomous advanced practice registered nurses intending to open new practices or practice locations in qualifying rural areas; specifying eligibility criteria for the grants; requiring the department, by a specified date, to create an application process for practitioners applying for grants under the program; specifying requirements for the application and application process; authorizing the department, subject to specific appropriation, to award grants under the program; specifying limitations on the awarding of grants; specifying expenses for which grant funds are authorized and prohibited; requiring the department to

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enter into a contract with each grant recipient;
specifying requirements for the contracts; authorizing
the department to adopt rules; requiring the
department, beginning on a specified date and annually
thereafter, to provide a report containing specified
information to the Governor and the Legislature;
providing for future legislative review and repeal of
the program; creating s. 381.9856, F.S.; creating the
Stroke, Cardiac, and Obstetric Response and Education
Grant Program within the Department of Health;
specifying the purpose of the program; defining terms;
requiring the department to award grants under the
program to certain entities meeting specified
criteria; requiring the department to give priority to
certain applicants; limiting individual grants to a
specified amount per year; requiring grant recipients
to submit quarterly reports to the department;
requiring the department to monitor program
implementation and outcomes; requiring the department
to submit an annual report to the Governor and the
Legislature by a specified date; authorizing the
department to adopt rules; providing that
implementation is limited to the extent specifically
funded by legislative appropriation; providing for
future legislative review and repeal of the program;
amending s. 395.6061, F.S.; providing that rural
hospital capital improvement grant program funding may
be awarded to rural hospitals to establish mobile care
units and telehealth kiosks for specified purposes;

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defining terms; amending s. 420.9073, F.S.; revising the calculation of guaranteed amounts distributed from the Local Government Housing Trust Fund; reenacting and amending s. 420.9075, F.S.; authorizing a certain percentage of the funds made available in each county and eligible municipality from the local housing distribution to be used to preserve multifamily affordable rental housing; specifying what such funds may be used for; providing an expiration; amending s. 1001.451, F.S.; revising the services required to be provided by regional consortium service organizations when such services are found to be necessary and appropriate by such organizations' boards of directors; revising the allocation that certain regional consortium service organizations are eligible to receive from the General Appropriations Act; requiring each regional consortium service organization to submit an annual report to the Department of Education; requiring that unexpended amounts in certain funds be carried forward; requiring each regional consortium service organization to provide quarterly financial reports to member districts; requiring member districts to designate a district to serve as a fiscal agent for certain purposes; providing for compensation of the fiscal agent district; requiring regional consortium service organizations to retain all funds received from grants or contracted services to cover indirect or administrative costs associated with the provision of

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such services; requiring the regional consortium service organization board of directors to determine products and services provided by the organization; requiring a regional consortium service organization board of directors to recommend the establishment of positions and appointments to a fiscal agent district; requiring that personnel be employed under specified personnel policies; authorizing the regional consortium service organization board of directors to recommend a salary schedule for personnel; authorizing regional consortium service organizations to purchase or lease property and facilities essential to their operations; providing for the distribution of revenue if a regional consortium service organization is dissolved; deleting a provision requiring applications for incentive grants; authorizing regional consortium service organization boards of directors to contract to provide services to nonmember districts; requiring that a fund balance be established for specified purposes; deleting a requirement for the use of certain funds; authorizing a regional consortium service organization to administer a specified program; creating s. 1001.4511, F.S.; creating the Regional Consortia Service Organization Supplemental Services Program; providing the purpose of the program; authorizing funds to be used for specified purposes; requiring each regional consortium service organization to report the distribution of funds annually to the Legislature; providing for the

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436 carryforward of funds; creating s. 1009.635, F.S.;

437 establishing the Rural Incentive for Professional

438 Educators Program within the Department of Education;

439 requiring the program to provide financial assistance

440 for the repayment of student loans to eligible

441 participants who establish permanent residency and

442 employment in rural areas of opportunity; providing

443 eligibility requirements; providing that eligible

444 participants may receive up to a certain amount in

445 total student loan repayment assistance over a certain

446 timeframe; requiring the department to verify certain

447 information of participants in the program before it

448 disburses awards; providing that the program is

449 administered through the Office of Student Financial

450 Assistance within the department; requiring the

451 program to develop procedures and monitor compliance;

452 requiring the State Board of Education to adopt rules

453 by a certain date; amending s. 1013.62, F.S.; revising

454 the calculation methodology used to determine the

455 amount of revenue that a school district must

456 distribute to each eligible charter school; amending

457 s. 1013.64, F.S.; revising conditions under which a

458 school district may receive funding on an approved

459 construction project; providing appropriations for

460 specified purposes; amending ss. 163.3187, 212.205,

461 257.191, 257.193, 265.283, 288.11621, 288.11631,

462 443.191, 571.26, and 571.265, F.S.; conforming cross-

463 references and provisions to changes made by the act;

464 reenacting s. 288.9935(8), F.S., relating to the

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Microfinance Guarantee Program, to incorporate the amendment made to s. 20.60, F.S., in a reference thereto; reenacting ss. 125.0104(5)(c), 193.624(3), 196.182(2), 218.12(1), 218.125(1), 218.135(1), 218.136(1), 252.35(2)(cc), 288.102(4), 403.064(16)(h), 589.08(2) and (3), and 1011.62(1)(f), F.S., relating to authorized uses of tourist development tax revenue; applicability of assessments of renewable energy source devices; application of exemptions of renewable energy source devices; appropriations to offset reductions in ad valorem tax revenue in fiscally constrained counties; offset for tax loss associated with certain constitutional amendments affecting fiscally constrained counties; offset for tax loss associated with reductions in value of certain citrus fruit packing and processing equipment; offset for ad valorem revenue loss affecting fiscally constrained counties; Division of Emergency Management powers; one-to-one match requirement under the Supply Chain Innovation Grant Program; applicability of provisions related to reuse of reclaimed water; land acquisition restrictions; and funds for operation of schools, respectively, to incorporate the amendment made to s. 218.67, F.S., in references thereto; reenacting s. 403.0741(6)(c), F.S., relating to grease waste removal and disposal, to incorporate the amendments made to ss. 218.67 and 339.2818, F.S., in references thereto; reenacting s. 163.3177(7)(e), F.S., relating to required and optional elements of comprehensive plans

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and studies and surveys, to incorporate the amendment made to s. 288.0656, F.S., in a reference thereto; reenacting s. 288.9962(7)(a), F.S., relating to the Broadband Opportunity Program, to incorporate the amendment made to s. 288.9961, F.S., in a reference thereto; reenacting s. 215.211(1), F.S., relating to service charges and elimination or reduction for specified proceeds, to incorporate the amendment made to s. 319.32, F.S., in a reference thereto; reenacting s. 339.66(5) and (6), F.S., relating to upgrades of arterial highways with controlled access facilities, to incorporate the amendment made to s. 339.68, F.S., in references thereto; reenacting ss. 420.9072(4) and (6), 420.9076(7)(b), and 420.9079(2), F.S., relating to the State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program, adoption of affordable housing incentive strategies and committees, and the Local Government Housing Trust Fund, respectively, to incorporate the amendment made to s. 420.9073, F.S., in references thereto; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Paragraph (a) of subsection (3) and paragraph (c) of subsection (10) of section 20.60, Florida Statutes, are amended, and paragraph (a) of subsection (5) of that section is reenacted, to read:

20.60 Department of Commerce; creation; powers and duties.—
(3)(a) The following divisions and offices of the

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Department of Commerce are established:

1. The Division of Economic Development.
2. The Division of Community Development.
3. The Division of Workforce Services.
4. The Division of Finance and Administration.
5. The Division of Information Technology.
6. The Office of the Secretary.
7. The Office of Rural Prosperity.
8. The Office of Economic Accountability and Transparency,

which shall:

- a. Oversee the department's critical objectives as determined by the secretary and make sure that the department's key objectives are clearly communicated to the public.
 - b. Organize department resources, expertise, data, and research to focus on and solve the complex economic challenges facing the state.
 - c. Provide leadership for the department's priority issues that require integration of policy, management, and critical objectives from multiple programs and organizations internal and external to the department; and organize and manage external communication on such priority issues.
 - d. Promote and facilitate key department initiatives to address priority economic issues and explore data and identify opportunities for innovative approaches to address such economic issues.
 - e. Promote strategic planning for the department.
- (5) The divisions within the department have specific responsibilities to achieve the duties, responsibilities, and goals of the department. Specifically:

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(a) The Division of Economic Development shall:

1. Analyze and evaluate business prospects identified by the Governor and the secretary.

2. Administer certain tax refund, tax credit, and grant programs created in law. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the department may expend interest earned from the investment of program funds deposited in the Grants and Donations Trust Fund to contract for the administration of those programs, or portions of the programs, assigned to the department by law, by the appropriations process, or by the Governor. Such expenditures shall be subject to review under chapter 216.

3. Develop measurement protocols for the state incentive programs and for the contracted entities which will be used to determine their performance and competitive value to the state. Performance measures, benchmarks, and sanctions must be developed in consultation with the legislative appropriations committees and the appropriate substantive committees, and are subject to the review and approval process provided in s. 216.177. The approved performance measures, standards, and sanctions shall be included and made a part of the strategic plan for contracts entered into for delivery of programs authorized by this section.

4. Develop a 5-year statewide strategic plan. The strategic plan must include, but need not be limited to:

a. Strategies for the promotion of business formation, expansion, recruitment, and retention through aggressive marketing, attraction of venture capital and finance development, domestic trade, international development, and

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export assistance, which lead to more and better jobs and higher wages for all geographic regions, disadvantaged communities, and populations of the state, including rural areas, minority businesses, and urban core areas.

b. The development of realistic policies and programs to further the economic diversity of the state, its regions, and their associated industrial clusters.

c. Specific provisions for the stimulation of economic development and job creation in rural areas and midsize cities and counties of the state, including strategies for rural marketing and the development of infrastructure in rural areas.

d. Provisions for the promotion of the successful long-term economic development of the state with increased emphasis in market research and information.

e. Plans for the generation of foreign investment in the state which create jobs paying above-average wages and which result in reverse investment in the state, including programs that establish viable overseas markets, assist in meeting the financing requirements of export-ready firms, broaden opportunities for international joint venture relationships, use the resources of academic and other institutions, coordinate trade assistance and facilitation services, and facilitate availability of and access to education and training programs that assure requisite skills and competencies necessary to compete successfully in the global marketplace.

f. The identification of business sectors that are of current or future importance to the state's economy and to the state's global business image, and development of specific strategies to promote the development of such sectors.

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g. Strategies for talent development necessary in the state to encourage economic development growth, taking into account factors such as the state's talent supply chain, education and training opportunities, and available workforce.

h. Strategies and plans to support this state's defense, space, and aerospace industries and the emerging complementary business activities and industries that support the development and growth of defense, space, and aerospace in this state.

5. Update the strategic plan every 5 years.

6. Involve CareerSource Florida, Inc.; direct-support organizations of the department; local governments; the general public; local and regional economic development organizations; other local, state, and federal economic, international, and workforce development entities; the business community; and educational institutions to assist with the strategic plan.

7. Coordinate with the Florida Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation in the development of the 4-year marketing plan pursuant to s. 288.1226(13).

8. Administer and manage relationships, as appropriate, with the entities and programs created pursuant to the Florida Capital Formation Act, ss. 288.9621-288.96255.

(10) The department shall, by November 1 of each year, submit an annual report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives on the condition of the business climate and economic development in the state.

(c) The report must incorporate annual reports of other programs, including:

1. A detailed report of the performance of the Black

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Business Loan Program and a cumulative summary of quarterly report data required under s. 288.714.

~~2. The Rural Economic Development Initiative established under s. 288.0656.~~

~~3.~~ A detailed report of the performance of the Florida Development Finance Corporation and a summary of the corporation's report required under s. 288.9610.

~~3.4.~~ Information provided by Space Florida under s. 331.3051 and an analysis of the activities and accomplishments of Space Florida.

Section 2. Subsection (5) is added to section 163.3168, Florida Statutes, to read:

163.3168 Planning innovations and technical assistance.—

(5) When selecting applications for funding for technical assistance, the state land planning agency shall give preference to local governments located in a rural area of opportunity as defined in s. 288.0656. The state land planning agency shall consult with the Office of Rural Prosperity when awarding funding pursuant to this section.

Section 3. Paragraph (i) is added to subsection (4) of section 201.15, Florida Statutes, to read:

201.15 Distribution of taxes collected.—All taxes collected under this chapter are hereby pledged and shall be first made available to make payments when due on bonds issued pursuant to s. 215.618 or s. 215.619, or any other bonds authorized to be issued on a parity basis with such bonds. Such pledge and availability for the payment of these bonds shall have priority over any requirement for the payment of service charges or costs of collection and enforcement under this section. All taxes

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collected under this chapter, except taxes distributed to the Land Acquisition Trust Fund pursuant to subsections (1) and (2), are subject to the service charge imposed in s. 215.20(1). Before distribution pursuant to this section, the Department of Revenue shall deduct amounts necessary to pay the costs of the collection and enforcement of the tax levied by this chapter. The costs and service charge may not be levied against any portion of taxes pledged to debt service on bonds to the extent that the costs and service charge are required to pay any amounts relating to the bonds. All of the costs of the collection and enforcement of the tax levied by this chapter and service charge shall be available and transferred to the extent necessary to pay debt service and any other amounts payable with respect to bonds authorized before January 1, 2017, secured by revenues distributed pursuant to this section. All taxes remaining after deduction of costs shall be distributed as follows:

(4) After the required distributions to the Land Acquisition Trust Fund pursuant to subsections (1) and (2) and deduction of the service charge imposed pursuant to s. 215.20(1), the remainder shall be distributed as follows:

(i) A total of \$30 million shall be paid to the credit of the State Transportation Trust Fund, which funds are exclusively for the use of the Florida Arterial Road Modernization Program as provided in s. 339.68.

Section 4. Paragraph (c) of subsection (2) of section 202.18, Florida Statutes, is amended, and paragraph (b) of subsection (2) of that section is republished, to read:

202.18 Allocation and disposition of tax proceeds.—The

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proceeds of the communications services taxes remitted under this chapter shall be treated as follows:

(2) The proceeds of the taxes remitted under s. 202.12(1)(b) shall be allocated as follows:

(b) Fifty-five and nine-tenths percent of the remainder shall be allocated to the state and distributed pursuant to s. 212.20(6), except that the proceeds allocated pursuant to s. 212.20(6)(d)2.b. shall be prorated to the participating counties in the same proportion as that month's collection of the taxes and fees imposed pursuant to chapter 212 and paragraph (1)(b).

(c)1. After the distribution required under paragraph (b), the remainder ~~During each calendar year, the remaining portion of the proceeds~~ shall be transferred to the Local Government Half-cent Sales Tax Clearing Trust Fund and. ~~Seventy percent of such proceeds shall be~~ allocated in the same proportion as the allocation of total receipts of the half-cent sales tax under s. 218.61 and the emergency distribution under s. 218.65 in the prior state fiscal year. ~~Thirty percent of such proceeds shall be distributed pursuant to s. 218.67.~~

2. The proportion of the proceeds allocated based on the emergency distribution under s. 218.65 shall be distributed pursuant to s. 218.65.

3. In each calendar year, the proportion of the proceeds allocated based on the half-cent sales tax under s. 218.61 shall be allocated to each county in the same proportion as the county's percentage of total sales tax allocation for the prior state fiscal year and distributed pursuant to s. 218.62.

4. The department shall distribute the appropriate amount to each municipality and county each month at the same time that

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726 local communications services taxes are distributed pursuant to
727 subsection (3).

728 Section 5. Paragraph (d) of subsection (6) of section
729 212.20, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

730 212.20 Funds collected, disposition; additional powers of
731 department; operational expense; refund of taxes adjudicated
732 unconstitutionally collected.—

733 (6) Distribution of all proceeds under this chapter and ss.
734 202.18(1)(b) and (2)(b) and 203.01(1)(a)3. is as follows:

735 (d) The proceeds of all other taxes and fees imposed
736 pursuant to this chapter or remitted pursuant to s. 202.18(1)(b)
737 and (2)(b) shall be distributed as follows:

738 1. In any fiscal year, the greater of \$500 million, minus
739 an amount equal to 4.6 percent of the proceeds of the taxes
740 collected pursuant to chapter 201, or 5.2 percent of all other
741 taxes and fees imposed pursuant to this chapter or remitted
742 pursuant to s. 202.18(1)(b) and (2)(b) shall be deposited in
743 monthly installments into the General Revenue Fund.

744 2. After the distribution under subparagraph 1., 8.9744
745 percent of the amount remitted by a sales tax dealer located
746 within a participating county pursuant to s. 218.61 shall be
747 transferred in two parts:

748 a. The total amount of \$50 million of the communications
749 services taxes remitted pursuant to s. 202.18(1)(b) and (2)(b),
750 in any fiscal year, shall be distributed by the department by a
751 nonoperating transfer to the Department of Commerce in monthly
752 installments to the Grants and Donations Trust Fund within the
753 Department of Commerce for the Utility Relocation Reimbursement
754 Grant Program created in s. 337.4031; and

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b. The remainder shall be transferred into the Local Government Half-cent Sales Tax Clearing Trust Fund. Beginning October 1, 2025, the amount to be transferred shall be reduced by 0.1018 percent, and the department shall distribute this amount to the Public Employees Relations Commission Trust Fund less \$5,000 each month, which shall be added to the amount calculated in subparagraph 3. and distributed accordingly.

3. After the distribution under subparagraphs 1. and 2., 0.0966 percent shall be transferred to the Local Government Half-cent Sales Tax Clearing Trust Fund and distributed pursuant to s. 218.65.

4. After the distributions under subparagraphs 1., 2., and 3., 2.0810 percent of the available proceeds shall be transferred monthly to the Revenue Sharing Trust Fund for Counties pursuant to s. 218.215.

5. After the distributions under subparagraphs 1., 2., and 3., 1.3653 percent of the available proceeds shall be transferred monthly to the Revenue Sharing Trust Fund for Municipalities pursuant to s. 218.215. If the total revenue to be distributed pursuant to this subparagraph is at least as great as the amount due from the Revenue Sharing Trust Fund for Municipalities and the former Municipal Financial Assistance Trust Fund in state fiscal year 1999-2000, no municipality shall receive less than the amount due from the Revenue Sharing Trust Fund for Municipalities and the former Municipal Financial Assistance Trust Fund in state fiscal year 1999-2000. If the total proceeds to be distributed are less than the amount received in combination from the Revenue Sharing Trust Fund for Municipalities and the former Municipal Financial Assistance

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Trust Fund in state fiscal year 1999-2000, each municipality shall receive an amount proportionate to the amount it was due in state fiscal year 1999-2000.

6. After the distributions required under subparagraphs 1.-5., the greater of \$50 million or 0.1412 percent of the available proceeds shall be transferred in each fiscal year to fiscally constrained counties pursuant to s. 218.67.

7. Of the remaining proceeds:

a. In each fiscal year, the sum of \$29,915,500 shall be divided into as many equal parts as there are counties in the state, and one part shall be distributed to each county. The distribution among the several counties must begin each fiscal year on or before January 5th and continue monthly for a total of 4 months. If a local or special law required that any moneys accruing to a county in fiscal year 1999-2000 under the then-existing provisions of s. 550.135 be paid directly to the district school board, special district, or a municipal government, such payment must continue until the local or special law is amended or repealed. The state covenants with holders of bonds or other instruments of indebtedness issued by local governments, special districts, or district school boards before July 1, 2000, that it is not the intent of this subparagraph to adversely affect the rights of those holders or relieve local governments, special districts, or district school boards of the duty to meet their obligations as a result of previous pledges or assignments or trusts entered into which obligated funds received from the distribution to county governments under then-existing s. 550.135. This distribution specifically is in lieu of funds distributed under s. 550.135

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before July 1, 2000.

b. The department shall distribute \$166,667 monthly to each applicant certified as a facility for a new or retained professional sports franchise pursuant to s. 288.1162. Up to \$41,667 shall be distributed monthly by the department to each certified applicant as defined in s. 288.11621 for a facility for a spring training franchise. However, not more than \$416,670 may be distributed monthly in the aggregate to all certified applicants for facilities for spring training franchises. Distributions begin 60 days after such certification and continue for not more than 30 years, except as otherwise provided in s. 288.11621. A certified applicant identified in this sub-subparagraph may not receive more in distributions than expended by the applicant for the public purposes provided in s. 288.1162(5) or s. 288.11621(3).

c. The department shall distribute up to \$83,333 monthly to each certified applicant as defined in s. 288.11631 for a facility used by a single spring training franchise, or up to \$166,667 monthly to each certified applicant as defined in s. 288.11631 for a facility used by more than one spring training franchise. Monthly distributions begin 60 days after such certification or July 1, 2016, whichever is later, and continue for not more than 20 years to each certified applicant as defined in s. 288.11631 for a facility used by a single spring training franchise or not more than 25 years to each certified applicant as defined in s. 288.11631 for a facility used by more than one spring training franchise. A certified applicant identified in this sub-subparagraph may not receive more in distributions than expended by the applicant for the public

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purposes provided in s. 288.11631(3).

d. The department shall distribute \$15,333 monthly to the State Transportation Trust Fund.

e. Beginning July 1, 2023, in each fiscal year, the department shall distribute \$27.5 million to the Florida Agricultural Promotional Campaign Trust Fund under s. 571.26, for further distribution in accordance with s. 571.265.

~~8.7.~~ All other proceeds must remain in the General Revenue Fund.

Section 6. Paragraph (h) of subsection (1) of section 215.971, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

215.971 Agreements funded with federal or state assistance.—

(1) An agency agreement that provides state financial assistance to a recipient or subrecipient, as those terms are defined in s. 215.97, or that provides federal financial assistance to a subrecipient, as defined by applicable United States Office of Management and Budget circulars, must include all of the following:

(h)1. If the agency agreement provides federal or state financial assistance to a county or municipality that is a rural community or rural area of opportunity as those terms are defined in s. 288.0656(2), a provision allowing the agency to provide for the payment of invoices to the county, municipality, or rural area of opportunity as that term is defined in s. 288.0656(2), for verified and eligible performance that has been completed in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth in the agreement. This provision is not intended to require reimbursement to the county, municipality, or rural area of

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871 opportunity for invoices paid, but to allow the agency to
872 provide for the payment of invoices due. The agency shall
873 expedite such payment requests in order to facilitate the timely
874 payment of invoices received by the county, municipality, or
875 rural area of opportunity. This provision is included to
876 alleviate the financial hardships that certain rural counties
877 and municipalities encounter when administering agreements, and
878 must be exercised by the agency when a county or municipality
879 demonstrates financial hardship, to the extent that federal or
880 state law, rule, or other regulation allows such payments. This
881 paragraph may not be construed to alter or limit any other
882 provisions of federal or state law, rule, or other regulation.

883 2. By August 1, 2027, and each year thereafter, each state
884 agency shall report to the Office of Rural Prosperity on the
885 implementation of this paragraph for the preceding fiscal year.
886 The Office of Rural Prosperity shall summarize the information
887 received pursuant to this paragraph in its annual report as
888 required in s. 288.013.

889 Section 7. Section 218.67, Florida Statutes, is amended to
890 read:

891 218.67 Distribution for fiscally constrained counties.-

892 (1) Each county ~~that is entirely within a rural area of~~
893 ~~opportunity as designated by the Governor pursuant to s.~~
894 ~~288.0656 or each county~~ for which the value of a mill will raise
895 no more than \$10 ~~\$5~~ million in revenue, based on the taxable
896 value certified pursuant to s. 1011.62(4)(a)1.a., from the
897 previous July 1, is ~~shall be~~ considered a fiscally constrained
898 county.

899 (2) Each fiscally constrained county government that

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participates in the local government half-cent sales tax shall be eligible to receive an additional distribution ~~from the Local Government Half-cent Sales Tax Clearing Trust Fund,~~ as provided in s. 212.20(6)(d)6. ~~s. 202.18(2)(c)1.,~~ in addition to its regular monthly distribution provided under this part and any emergency or supplemental distribution under s. 218.65.

(3) The amount to be distributed to each fiscally constrained county shall be determined by the Department of Revenue at the beginning of the fiscal year, using the prior fiscal year's sales and use tax collections from the most recent fiscal year that reports 12 months of collections ~~July 1 taxable value certified pursuant to s. 1011.62(4)(a)1.a., tax data,~~ the population as defined in s. 218.21, and the most current calendar year per capita personal income, as initially reported by the Bureau of Economic Analysis of the United States ~~Department of Commerce millage rate levied for the prior fiscal year.~~ The amount distributed shall be allocated based upon the following factors:

(a) The contribution-to-revenue ~~relative revenue-raising-capacity~~ factor for each participating county must equal 100 multiplied by a quotient, the numerator of which is the county's population and the denominator of which is the state sales and use tax collections attributable to the county ~~shall be the ability of the eligible county to generate ad valorem revenues from 1 mill of taxation on a per capita basis. A county that raises no more than \$25 per capita from 1 mill shall be assigned a value of 1; a county that raises more than \$25 but no more than \$30 per capita from 1 mill shall be assigned a value of 0.75; and a county that raises more than \$30 but no more than~~

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~~\$50 per capita from 1 mill shall be assigned a value of 0.5. No value shall be assigned to counties that raise more than \$50 per capita from 1 mill of ad valorem taxation.~~

(b) The personal-income local-effort factor must equal a quotient, the numerator of which is the median per capita personal income of participating counties and the denominator of which is the county's per capita personal income ~~shall be a measure of the relative level of local effort of the eligible county as indicated by the millage rate levied for the prior fiscal year. The local-effort factor shall be the most recently adopted countywide operating millage rate for each eligible county multiplied by 0.1.~~

(c) Each eligible county's proportional allocation of the total amount available to be distributed to all of the eligible counties must ~~shall~~ be in the same proportion as the sum of the county's two factors is to the sum of the two factors for all eligible counties. The proportional rate computation must be carried to the fifth decimal place, and the amount to distribute to each county must be rounded to the nearest whole dollar amount. The counties that are eligible to receive an allocation under this subsection and the amount available to be distributed to such counties do ~~shall~~ not include counties participating in the phaseout period under subsection (4) or the amounts they remain eligible to receive during the phaseout.

(4) For those counties that no longer qualify under the requirements of subsection (1) after the effective date of this act, there shall be a 2-year phaseout period. Beginning on July 1 of the year following the year in which the value of a mill for that county exceeds \$10 ~~\$5~~ million in revenue, the county

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shall receive two-thirds of the amount received in the prior year, and beginning on July 1 of the second year following the year in which the value of a mill for that county exceeds \$10 ~~\$5~~ million in revenue, the county shall receive one-third of the amount received in the last year that the county qualified as a fiscally constrained county. Following the 2-year phaseout period, the county is ~~shall~~ no longer be eligible to receive any distributions under this section unless the county can be considered a fiscally constrained county as provided in subsection (1).

(5) (a) The revenues received under this section must be allocated ~~may be used~~ by a county to be used for the following purposes:

1. Fifty percent for public safety, including salary expenditures for law enforcement officers or correctional officers, as those terms are defined in s. 943.10(1) and (2), respectively, firefighters as defined in s. 633.102, and emergency medical technicians or paramedics as those terms are defined in s. 401.23.

2. Thirty percent for infrastructure needs.

3. Twenty percent for any public purpose.

(b) The revenues received under this section ~~any public purpose, except that such revenues~~ may not be used to pay debt service on bonds, notes, certificates of participation, or any other forms of indebtedness.

Section 8. Present paragraphs (d) and (e) of subsection (7) of section 288.001, Florida Statutes, are redesignated as paragraphs (e) and (f), respectively, and a new paragraph (d) is added to that subsection, to read:

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288.001 The Florida Small Business Development Center
Network.—

(7) ADDITIONAL STATE FUNDS; USES; PAY-PER-PERFORMANCE
INCENTIVES; STATEWIDE SERVICE; SERVICE ENHANCEMENTS; BEST
PRACTICES; ELIGIBILITY.—

(d) Notwithstanding paragraphs (a), (b), and (c), the
network shall use funds directly appropriated for the specific
purpose of expanding service in rural communities as defined in
s. 288.0656, in addition to any funds allocated by the network
from other sources. The network shall use the funds to develop
an activity plan focused on network consultants and resources in
rural communities. In collaboration with regional economic
development organizations as defined in s. 288.018, the plan
must provide for either full- or part-time consultants to be
available for at least 20 hours per week in rural areas or to be
permanently stationed in rural areas. This may include
establishing a circuit in specific rural locations to ensure the
consultants' availability on a regular basis. By using the funds
to create a regular presence in rural areas, the network will
strengthen community collaboration, raise awareness of available
resources to provide opportunities for new business development
or existing business growth, and make professional experience,
education, and business information available in these essential
communities. The network may dedicate funds to facilitate local
or regional events that focus on small business topics, provide
consulting services, and leverage partner organizations, such as
the regional economic development organizations, local workforce
development boards as described in s. 445.007, and Florida
College System institutions.

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Section 9. Section 288.007, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

288.007 Inventory of communities seeking to recruit businesses.—By September 30 of each year, a county or municipality that has a population of at least 25,000 or its local economic development organization, and each local government within a rural area of opportunity as defined in s. 288.0656 or its regional economic development organization as defined in s. 288.018 or other local economic development organization, shall ~~must~~ submit to the department a brief overview of the strengths, services, and economic development incentives that its community offers. The local government or its ~~local~~ economic development organization also shall ~~must~~ identify any industries that it is encouraging to locate or relocate to its area. Unless otherwise required pursuant to this section, a county or municipality having a population of 25,000 or less ~~fewer~~ or its ~~local~~ economic development organization seeking to recruit businesses may submit information as required in this section and may participate in any activity or initiative resulting from the collection, analysis, and reporting of the information to the department pursuant to this section.

Section 10. Section 288.013, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

288.013 Office of Rural Prosperity.—

(1) The Legislature finds that the unique characteristics of the rural communities in this state are integral to making Florida an attractive place to visit, work, and live. The Legislature further finds that fostering a prosperous rural

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economy and vibrant rural communities serves the best interests of this state. Rural prosperity supports this state's infrastructure, housing, agricultural, and food-processing needs and advances the overall health of Florida's economy. It is essential that rural areas be able to grow and thrive, whether independently or through regional partnerships. To better serve rural communities, and in recognition of the unique challenges and opportunities they face, the Office of Rural Prosperity is established to ensure that state efforts to support rural Florida are coordinated, focused, and effective.

(2) The Office of Rural Prosperity is created within the Department of Commerce to support rural communities by helping rural stakeholders navigate available programs and resources and by representing rural interests across state government.

(3) The Governor shall appoint a director to lead the office, subject to confirmation by the Senate. The director shall report to the secretary of the department and shall serve at the pleasure of the secretary.

(4) The office shall do all of the following:

(a) Serve as the state's point of contact for rural local governments.

(b) Administer the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) pursuant to s. 288.0656.

(c) Provide training and technical assistance to rural local governments on a broad range of community and economic development activities. The training and technical assistance may be offered using communications technology or in person. In addition, the office shall post a recorded training and technical assistance video to the office's website which covers

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all of the required topics. The training and technical assistance must include, at a minimum, the following topics:

1. How to access state and federal resources, including training on the online rural resource directory required under paragraph (d).

2. Best practices for comprehensive planning, economic development, and land development in rural communities.

3. Strategies to address staffing shortages and strengthen management functions in rural local governments.

4. Requirements of, and updates on recent changes to, the Community Planning Act under s. 163.3161.

5. Updates on other recent state and federal laws affecting rural local governments.

(d) Create and maintain an online rural resource directory to serve as an interactive tool for users to navigate state and federal resources, tools, and services available to rural local governments. The office shall ensure the directory is regularly updated and, to the greatest extent possible, includes current information on programs, resources, and services that address the needs of rural communities in all areas of governance. Each state agency shall routinely provide information and updates to the office to support maintenance of the directory. The directory must allow users to search by indicators, such as agency name, resource type, or topic, and include a notification feature that alerts users when new or updated resources are available. To the greatest extent possible, the directory must identify any financial match requirements associated with listed programs.

(5) (a) By October 1, 2026, the office shall establish and

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1103 provide staff for seven regional rural community liaison centers
1104 across this state to provide specialized in-person state support
1105 to rural local governments located in rural areas of opportunity
1106 as defined in s. 288.0656. The department shall, by rule, divide
1107 the state into seven regions and assign a liaison center to each
1108 region. Each liaison center shall serve the local governments
1109 within its geographic area and shall be staffed with at least
1110 two full-time department employees. At a minimum, each liaison
1111 center has the following powers and duties:

1112 1. Assist local governments in planning and achieving goals
1113 related to local or regional growth, economic development, and
1114 rural prosperity.

1115 2. Facilitate access to state and federal resources,
1116 including grants, loans, and other available assistance.

1117 3. Advise local governments on available program waivers,
1118 including financial match waivers or reductions for projects
1119 using state or federal funds through REDI under s. 288.0656.

1120 4. Coordinate technical assistance needs with the
1121 department and other state or federal agencies.

1122 5. Promote model ordinances, policies, and strategies
1123 related to economic development.

1124 6. Assist local governments with regulatory and reporting
1125 compliance requirements.

1126 (b) To the greatest extent possible, each regional rural
1127 community liaison center shall coordinate with local and
1128 regional governmental entities, regional economic development
1129 organizations as defined in s. 288.018, and other appropriate
1130 entities to establish a network that fosters community-driven
1131 solutions promoting viable and sustainable rural communities.

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1132 (c) Each regional rural community liaison center shall
1133 regularly engage with REDI established in s. 288.0656, and at
1134 least one staff member from each liaison center shall attend the
1135 monthly REDI meeting, either in person or by means of electronic
1136 communication.

1137 (6) By December 1, 2026, and each year thereafter, the
1138 director of the office shall submit to the Administration
1139 Commission within the Executive Office of the Governor a written
1140 report describing the office's operations and accomplishments
1141 for the preceding year. The report must include the REDI report
1142 required by s. 288.0656(8). In consultation with the Department
1143 of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the office shall also
1144 include in the annual report recommendations for policies,
1145 programs, and funding initiatives to further support the needs
1146 of rural communities in this state. The office shall also submit
1147 the annual report to the President of the Senate and the Speaker
1148 of the House of Representatives by December 1 of each year and
1149 publish it on the office's website. At the next scheduled
1150 meeting of the Administration Commission following submission of
1151 the report, the director shall, in person, present detailed
1152 information from the report required under this subsection.

1153 (7) (a) The Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government
1154 Accountability (OPPAGA) shall evaluate the effectiveness of the
1155 office and submit a report of its findings, including any
1156 recommended policy or statutory changes, to the President of the
1157 Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by
1158 December 15, 2027, and each year thereafter through 2029.
1159 Beginning in 2032, the report must be submitted every 3 years.

1160 (b) OPPAGA shall review strategies implemented by other

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states for rural community preservation, enhancement, and revitalization and evaluate their effectiveness and potential applicability in this state. OPPAGA shall submit a report of its findings to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by December 15, 2028, and every 5 years thereafter.

Section 11. Section 288.014, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

288.014 Renaissance Grants Program.—

(1) The Legislature finds that it has historically provided programs to assist rural communities with economic development and to enhance their ability to attract businesses and that, by providing that extra component of economic viability, rural communities are able to attract new businesses and grow existing ones. However, the Legislature further finds that a subset of rural communities has decreased in population over the past decade, contributing to a decline in local business activity and economic development. The Legislature therefore determines that state assistance must evolve to support these communities in achieving the foundation necessary for economic viability. The intent of the Renaissance Grants Program is to reverse economic deterioration in such rural communities by retaining and attracting residents by giving them a reason to stay, which will stimulate natural economic growth, business opportunities, and improved quality of life.

(2) The Office of Rural Prosperity within the department shall administer the Renaissance Grants Program to provide block grants to eligible counties. By October 1, 2026, the Office of Economic and Demographic Research shall certify to the Office of

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1190 Rural Prosperity which counties are growth-impeded. For the
1191 purposes of this section, the term "growth-impeded" means a
1192 county that, as of the most recent population estimate, has
1193 experienced a declining population over the previous 10 years.
1194 After the initial certification, the Office of Economic and
1195 Demographic Research shall annually certify whether the county
1196 remains growth-impeded, until the office certifies the county
1197 has had 3 consecutive years of population growth. Upon such
1198 certification of population growth, the county remains eligible
1199 for the program for 1 additional year to prepare for the end of
1200 block grant funding.

1201 (3) (a) Each participating county shall enter into an
1202 agreement with the Office of Rural Prosperity to receive block
1203 grant funds. Counties have broad authority to design their
1204 specific plan to achieve population growth consistent with this
1205 section. The Office of Rural Prosperity may not determine the
1206 manner in which a county implements its plan. However, regional
1207 rural community liaison center staff shall provide assistance in
1208 developing the county's plan, upon the county's request.

1209 (b) Each participating county shall submit an annual report
1210 to the Office of Rural Prosperity detailing program activities,
1211 intergovernmental agreements, and other information as required
1212 by the office.

1213 (c) Each participating county shall receive \$1 million from
1214 the funds appropriated to the program, or an equal share of the
1215 funds appropriated if insufficient to provide that amount.
1216 Counties shall make all attempts to limit expenses for
1217 administrative costs, consistent with the need for prudent
1218 management and accountability in the use of public funds.

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Counties may supplement the block grant with other funding sources, including local, state, or federal grants, and may seek public or private contributions or in-kind support to advance program activities.

(4) (a) Each participating county shall hire and retain a renaissance coordinator, who may be funded from block grant proceeds. The renaissance coordinator is responsible for:

1. Ensuring that block grant funds are used as provided in this section;

2. Coordinating with other local governments, school boards, Florida College System institutions, and other partners; and

3. Reporting as necessary to the state, including information necessary pursuant to subsection (7).

(b) The Office of Rural Prosperity regional rural community liaison center staff shall, upon request, provide assistance and training to the renaissance coordinator to support successful implementation of the block grant.

(5) Each participating county shall design a plan for targeted community investments designed to achieve population growth and increase the economic vitality. The plan must include the following key features for use of the state support:

(a) Technology centers located within schools or on school premises, administered by the local school board, providing extended hours and access for students.

(b) Facilities that colocate adult day care with child care facilities. The site-sharing facilities must be managed to also encourage interaction between generations and increase the health and well-being of younger and older participants, reduce

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1248 social isolation, and create cost and time efficiencies for
1249 working families. The regional rural community liaison center
1250 staff of the Office of Rural Prosperity shall, upon request,
1251 assist the county with bringing recommendations to the Rural
1252 Economic Development Initiative or the appropriate state agency
1253 to streamline all required state permits, licenses, regulations,
1254 or other requirements.

1255 (c) Technology labs operated in partnership with the
1256 nearest Florida College System institution or a career center
1257 under s. 1001.44. Repurposed vacant industrial sites or existing
1258 office space must be given priority in the selection of lab
1259 locations. Each local technology lab must be staffed and open
1260 for extended hours with the capacity to provide:

1261 1. Access to trainers and equipment necessary for earning
1262 certificates or online degrees in technology;

1263 2. Hands-on assistance in securing remote work
1264 opportunities; and

1265 3. Studio space equipped for remote technology-based work
1266 available for graduates and other qualifying residents.
1267 Participating counties may determine which residents receive
1268 priority access. Collaboration with community partners,
1269 including the local workforce development board as described in
1270 s. 445.007, to provide training opportunities, in-kind support
1271 such as transportation to and from the lab, financing of
1272 equipment for in-home use, or basic maintenance of such
1273 equipment is required.

1274 (6) In addition to hiring a renaissance coordinator, each
1275 participating county shall develop intergovernmental agreements
1276 for shared responsibilities with its municipalities, school

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board, and Florida College System institution or career center
and enter into necessary contracts with providers and community
partners in order to implement the plan.

(7)(a) Every 2 years, beginning in 2027, the Auditor
General shall conduct an operational audit as defined in s.
11.45 of each county's grant activities.

(b) On December 15, 2027, and every year thereafter, the
Office of Economic and Demographic Research shall submit a
report to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the
House of Representatives summarizing renaissance block grant
recipients by county. The report must provide key economic
indicators that measure progress in reversing long-term trends
in the county. The Office of Rural Prosperity shall, upon
request, provide any data necessary to complete the report.

(8) Notwithstanding s. 216.301, funds appropriated for the
purposes of this section are not subject to reversion.

(9) This section expires June 30, 2041.

Section 12. Section 288.0175, Florida Statutes, is created
to read:

288.0175 Public Infrastructure Smart Technology Grant
Program.—

(1) The Public Infrastructure Smart Technology Grant
Program is established within the Office of Rural Prosperity
within the department to fund and support public infrastructure
smart technology projects in communities located in rural areas
of opportunity, subject to legislative appropriation.

(2) As used in this section, the term:

(a) "Public infrastructure smart technology" means systems
or applications that use connectivity, data analytics, or

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1306 automation to improve public infrastructure by increasing
1307 efficiency, enhancing public services, and promoting sustainable
1308 development.

1309 (b) "Rural area of opportunity" has the same meaning as in
1310 s. 288.0656.

1311 (c) "Smart region" means a geographic area that uses
1312 technology and innovative ideas to improve the quality of life
1313 for its citizens by addressing regional challenges through
1314 collaboration among government, businesses, and communities.

1315 (d) "Smart technology lead organization" means a not-for-
1316 profit corporation organized under s. 501(c)(3) of the Internal
1317 Revenue Code which has been in existence for at least 3 years
1318 and specializes in smart region planning.

1319 (3)(a) The Office of Rural Prosperity shall contract with
1320 one or more smart technology lead organizations to administer
1321 the grant program for the purpose of deploying public
1322 infrastructure smart technology in rural communities. Under such
1323 contracts, the smart technology lead organization shall award
1324 grants to counties and municipalities located within a rural
1325 area of opportunity for eligible public infrastructure smart
1326 technology projects.

1327 (b) Each contract must specify deliverables, reporting
1328 requirements, timeframes, and any other term the office deems
1329 necessary. At a minimum, the contract must require the smart
1330 technology lead organization to:

1331 1. Collaborate with counties and municipalities in rural
1332 areas of opportunity to identify cost-effective smart technology
1333 solutions for improving public services and infrastructure.

1334 2. Provide technical assistance to counties and

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municipalities located in rural areas of opportunity in
developing public infrastructure smart technology project plans.

3. Facilitate connections between rural communities and
other entities, including companies and regional partners to
maximize the impact of funded projects.

(4) The Office of Rural Prosperity shall include a summary
of projects funded under this section in its annual report
required by s. 288.013(6).

Section 13. Subsections (1), (2), and (4) of section
288.018, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

288.018 Regional Rural Development Grants Program.—

(1)(a) For the purposes of this section, the term “regional
economic development organization” means an economic development
organization located in or contracted to serve a rural area of
opportunity, as defined in s. 288.0656 ~~s. 288.0656(2)(d)~~.

(b) Subject to appropriation, the Office of Rural
Prosperity ~~department~~ shall establish a grant program to provide
funding to regional economic development organizations for the
purpose of building the professional capacity of those
organizations. Building the professional capacity of a regional
economic development organization includes hiring professional
staff to develop, deliver, and provide needed economic
development professional services, including technical
assistance, education and leadership development, marketing, and
project recruitment. Grants may also be used by a regional
economic development organization to provide technical
assistance to local governments, local economic development
organizations, and existing and prospective businesses.

(c) A regional economic development organization may apply

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annually to the office ~~department~~ for a grant. The office ~~department~~ is authorized to approve, on an annual basis, grants to such regional economic development organizations. The office ~~may award a maximum amount of \$50,000 in a year to an organization may receive in any year will be \$50,000, or \$250,000 each to for~~ any three regional economic development organizations that serve an entire region of a rural area of opportunity designated pursuant to s. 288.0656(7) if they are recognized by the office ~~department~~ as serving such a region.

(2) In approving the participants, the office ~~department~~ shall require the following:

(a) Documentation of official commitments of support from each of the units of local government represented by the regional organization.

(b) Demonstration that the organization is in existence and actively involved in economic development activities serving the region.

(c) Demonstration of the manner in which the organization is or will coordinate its efforts with those of other local and state organizations.

(4) Except as otherwise provided in the General Appropriations Act, the office ~~department~~ may expend up to \$750,000 each fiscal year from funds appropriated ~~to the Rural Community Development Revolving Loan Fund~~ for the purposes outlined in this section.

Section 14. Section 288.019, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

288.019 Rural considerations in grant review and evaluation processes; financial match waiver or reduction.-

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(1) Notwithstanding any other law, and to the fullest extent possible, each agency and organization ~~the member agencies and organizations~~ of the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) as defined in s. 288.0656 ~~s. 288.0656(6)(a)~~ shall review:

(a) All grant and loan application evaluation criteria and scoring procedures to ensure the fullest access for rural communities ~~counties~~ as defined in s. 288.0656 ~~s. 288.0656(2)~~ to resources available throughout this ~~the~~ state; and

(b) The financial match requirements for projects in rural communities.

(2)~~(1)~~ Each REDI agency and organization shall consider the impact on and ability of rural communities to meet and be competitive under such criteria, scoring, and requirements. Upon review, each REDI agency and organization shall ~~review all evaluation and scoring procedures and~~ develop a proposal for modifications to those procedures which minimize the financial and resource impact to a rural community, including waiver or reduction of any required financial match requirements ~~impact of a project within a rural area.~~

(a)~~(2)~~ Evaluation criteria and scoring procedures must provide for an appropriate ranking, when ranking is a component of the program, based on the proportionate impact that projects have on a rural area when compared with similar project impacts on an urban area. Additionally,

~~(3)~~ evaluation criteria and scoring procedures must recognize the disparity of available fiscal resources for an equal level of financial support from an urban county or municipality and a rural county or municipality.

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1422 ~~(a)~~ The evaluation criteria must ~~should~~ weight contribution
1423 in proportion to the amount of funding available at the local
1424 level.

1425 (b) Match requirements must be waived or reduced for rural
1426 communities. When appropriate, an in-kind match must ~~should~~ be
1427 allowed and applied as a financial match when a rural community
1428 county is experiencing economic financial distress as defined in
1429 s. 288.0656 through elevated unemployment at a rate in excess of
1430 the state's average by 5 percentage points or because of the
1431 loss of its ad valorem base. Donations of land, though usually
1432 not recognized as an in-kind match, may be treated as such. As
1433 appropriate, each agency and organization that applies for or
1434 receives federal funding must request federal approval to waive
1435 or reduce the financial match requirements, if any, for projects
1436 in rural communities.

1437 ~~(3)(4)~~ For existing programs, The proposal developed under
1438 subsection (2) modified evaluation criteria and scoring
1439 procedure must be submitted delivered to the Office of Rural
1440 Prosperity department for distribution to the REDI agencies and
1441 organizations. The REDI agencies and organizations shall review
1442 and make comments and recommendations that. Future rules,
1443 programs, evaluation criteria, and scoring processes must be
1444 brought before a REDI meeting for review, discussion, and
1445 recommendation to allow rural communities counties fuller access
1446 to the state's resources.

1447 (4) Each REDI agency and organization shall ensure that
1448 related administrative rules or policies are modified, as
1449 necessary, to reflect the finalized proposal and that
1450 information about the authorized waiver or reduction is included

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1451 in the online rural resource directory of the Office of Rural
1452 Prosperity required in s. 288.013(4)(d).

1453 (5) The rural liaison from the related regional rural
1454 community liaison center district shall assist the rural
1455 community to make waiver or reduction requests.

1456 Section 15. Subsection (3) is added to section 288.021,
1457 Florida Statutes, to read:

1458 288.021 Economic development liaison.—

1459 (3) When practicable, the staff member appointed as the
1460 economic development liaison shall also serve as the agency
1461 representative for the Rural Economic Development Initiative
1462 pursuant to s. 288.0656.

1463 Section 16. Section 288.065, Florida Statutes, is amended
1464 to read:

1465 288.065 Rural Community Development Revolving Loan Fund.—

1466 (1) The Rural Community Development Revolving Loan Fund
1467 Program is established within the Office of Rural Prosperity
1468 ~~department~~ to facilitate the use of existing federal, state, and
1469 local financial resources by providing local governments with
1470 financial assistance to further promote the economic viability
1471 of rural communities. These funds may be used to finance
1472 initiatives directed toward maintaining or developing the
1473 economic base of rural communities, especially initiatives
1474 addressing employment opportunities for residents of these
1475 communities.

1476 (2)(a) The program shall provide for long-term loans, loan
1477 guarantees, and loan loss reserves to units of local
1478 governments, or economic development organizations substantially
1479 underwritten by a unit of local government.7

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1480 (b) For purposes of this section, the term "unit of local
1481 government" means any of the following:

1482 1. A county ~~within counties~~ with a population ~~populations~~
1483 ~~of 75,000 or less. fewer, or within any~~

1484 2. A county with a population of 125,000 or less ~~fewer~~
1485 ~~which is contiguous to a county with a population of 75,000 or~~
1486 ~~less. fewer~~

1487 3. A municipality within a county described in subparagraph
1488 1. or subparagraph 2.

1489 4. A county or municipality within a rural area of
1490 opportunity designated under s. 288.0656.

1491
1492 For purposes of this paragraph, population is determined in
1493 accordance with the most recent official estimates pursuant to
1494 s. 186.901 and must include those residing in incorporated and
1495 unincorporated areas of a county, ~~based on the most recent~~
1496 ~~official population estimate as determined under s. 186.901,~~
1497 ~~including those residing in incorporated areas and those~~
1498 ~~residing in unincorporated areas of the county, or to units of~~
1499 ~~local government, or economic development organizations~~
1500 ~~substantially underwritten by a unit of local government, within~~
1501 ~~a rural area of opportunity.~~

1502 (c) ~~(b)~~ Requests for loans must ~~shall~~ be made by application
1503 to the office ~~department~~. Loans must ~~shall~~ be made pursuant to
1504 agreements specifying the terms and conditions agreed to between
1505 the applicant and the office ~~department~~. The loans are ~~shall be~~
1506 the legal obligations of the applicant.

1507 (d) ~~(e)~~ All repayments of principal and interest must ~~shall~~
1508 be returned to the loan fund and made available for loans to

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other applicants. However, in a rural area of opportunity designated under s. 288.0656 ~~by the Governor~~, and upon approval by the office ~~department~~, repayments of principal and interest may be retained by the applicant if such repayments are dedicated and matched to fund regionally based economic development organizations representing the rural area of opportunity.

(3) The office ~~department~~ shall manage the fund, establishing loan practices that must include, but are not limited to, procedures for establishing loan interest rates, uses of funding, application procedures, and application review procedures. The office has ~~department shall have~~ final approval authority for any loan under this section.

(4) Notwithstanding ~~the provisions of~~ s. 216.301, funds appropriated for this loan fund may ~~purpose shall~~ not be subject to reversion.

(5) The office shall include in its annual report required under s. 288.013 detailed information about the fund, including loans made during the previous fiscal year, loans active, loans terminated or repaid, and the amount of funds not obligated as of 14 days before the date the report is due.

Section 17. Subsections (1), (2), and (3) of section 288.0655, Florida Statutes, are amended, and subsection (6) is added to that section, to read:

288.0655 Rural Infrastructure Fund.—

(1) There is created within the Office of Rural Prosperity ~~department~~ the Rural Infrastructure Fund to facilitate the planning, preparing, and financing of infrastructure projects in rural communities which will encourage job creation, capital

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investment, and the strengthening and diversification of rural economies by promoting tourism, trade, and economic development. Grants under this program may be awarded to a unit of local government within a rural area of opportunity or a rural community as those terms are defined in s. 288.0656 or to a regional economic development organization, a unit of local government, or an economic development organization substantially underwritten by a unit of local government for an infrastructure project located within an unincorporated area that has a population of 15,000 or less, has been in existence for 100 years or more, is contiguous to a rural community, and has been adversely affected by a natural disaster or presents a unique economic development opportunity of regional impact.

(2)(a) Funds appropriated by the Legislature must ~~shall~~ be distributed by the office ~~department~~ through grant programs that maximize the use of federal, local, and private resources, including, but not limited to, those available under the Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program.

(b) To facilitate access of rural communities and rural areas of opportunity as defined by the Rural Economic Development Initiative to infrastructure funding programs of the Federal Government, such as those offered by the United States Department of Agriculture and the United States Department of Commerce, and state programs, including those offered by Rural Economic Development Initiative agencies, and to facilitate local government or private infrastructure funding efforts, the office ~~department~~ may award grants for up to 75 percent of the total infrastructure project cost, or up to 100 percent of the total infrastructure project cost for a project located in a

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rural community as defined in s. 288.0656(2) which is also located in a fiscally constrained county as defined in s. 218.67(1) or a rural area of opportunity as defined in s. 288.0656(2). Eligible uses of funds may include improving any inadequate infrastructure that has resulted in regulatory action that prohibits economic or community growth and reducing the costs to community users of proposed infrastructure improvements that exceed such costs in comparable communities. Eligible uses of funds include improvements to public infrastructure for industrial or commercial sites and upgrades to or development of public tourism infrastructure. Authorized infrastructure may include the following public or public-private partnership facilities: storm water systems; telecommunications facilities; roads or other remedies to transportation impediments; nature-based tourism facilities; or other physical requirements necessary to facilitate tourism, trade, and economic development activities in the community. Authorized infrastructure may also include publicly or privately owned self-powered nature-based tourism facilities, publicly owned telecommunications facilities, and additions to the distribution facilities of the existing natural gas utility as defined in s. 366.04(3)(c), the existing electric utility as defined in s. 366.02, or the existing water or wastewater utility as defined in s. 367.021(12), or any other existing water or wastewater facility, which owns a gas or electric distribution system or a water or wastewater system in this state when:

1. A contribution-in-aid of construction is required to serve public or public-private partnership facilities under the tariffs of any natural gas, electric, water, or wastewater

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1596 utility as defined herein; and

1597 2. Such utilities as defined herein are willing and able to
1598 provide such service.

1599 (c) The office ~~department~~ may award grants of up to
1600 \$300,000 for infrastructure feasibility studies, design and
1601 engineering activities, or other infrastructure planning and
1602 preparation or site readiness activities. Site readiness
1603 expenses may include clearing title, surveys, permitting,
1604 environmental studies, and regulatory compliance costs. Grants
1605 awarded under this paragraph may be used in conjunction with
1606 grants awarded under paragraph (b). In evaluating applications
1607 under this paragraph, the office ~~department~~ shall consider the
1608 extent to which the application seeks to minimize administrative
1609 and consultant expenses.

1610 (d) The office ~~department~~ shall participate in a memorandum
1611 of agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture
1612 under which state funds available through the Rural
1613 Infrastructure Fund may be advanced, in excess of the prescribed
1614 state share, for a project that has received from the United
1615 States Department of Agriculture a preliminary determination of
1616 eligibility for federal financial support. State funds in excess
1617 of the prescribed state share which are advanced pursuant to
1618 this paragraph and the memorandum of agreement must ~~shall~~ be
1619 reimbursed when funds are awarded under an application for
1620 federal funding.

1621 (e) To enable local governments to access the resources
1622 available pursuant to s. 403.973(17), the office ~~department~~ may
1623 award grants for surveys, feasibility studies, and other
1624 activities related to the identification and preclearance review

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of land which is suitable for preclearance review. Authorized grants under this paragraph may not exceed \$75,000 each, except in the case of a project in a rural area of opportunity, in which case the grant may not exceed \$300,000. Any funds awarded under this paragraph must be matched at a level of 50 percent with local funds, except that any funds awarded for a project in a rural area of opportunity do not require a match of local funds. ~~If an application for funding is for a catalyst site, as defined in s. 288.0656, the requirement for local match may be waived pursuant to the process in s. 288.06561.~~ In evaluating applications under this paragraph, the office ~~department~~ shall consider the extent to which the application seeks to minimize administrative and consultant expenses.

(3) The office ~~department~~, in consultation with the Department of Transportation ~~Florida Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation~~, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, as appropriate, shall review and certify applications pursuant to s. 288.061. The review must include an evaluation of the economic benefit and long-term viability. The office has ~~department shall have~~ final approval for any grant under this section.

(6) The office shall include in its annual report required under s. 288.013 detailed information about the fund, including grants made for the year, grants active, grants terminated or complete, and the amount of funds not obligated as of 14 days before the date the report is due.

Section 18. Subsection (1), paragraphs (a), (b), and (e) of subsection (2), subsections (3) and (6), paragraphs (b) and (c)

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of subsection (7), and subsection (8) of section 288.0656, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

288.0656 Rural Economic Development Initiative.—

(1)(a) Recognizing that rural communities and regions continue to face extraordinary challenges in their efforts to significantly improve their economies, specifically in terms of personal income, job creation, average wages, and strong tax bases, it is the intent of the Legislature to encourage and facilitate ~~the location and expansion of major economic development projects of significant scale~~ in such rural communities. The Legislature finds that rural communities are the essential conduits for the economy's distribution supply, manufacturing supply, and food supply.

(b) The Rural Economic Development Initiative, known as "REDI," is created within the Office of Rural Prosperity ~~department~~, and all the participation of state and regional agencies listed in paragraph (6)(a) shall participate in this initiative ~~is authorized~~.

(2) As used in this section, the term:

~~(a) "Catalyst project" means a business locating or expanding in a rural area of opportunity to serve as an economic generator of regional significance for the growth of a regional target industry cluster. The project must provide capital investment on a scale significant enough to affect the entire region and result in the development of high-wage and high-skill jobs.~~

~~(b) "Catalyst site" means a parcel or parcels of land within a rural area of opportunity that has been prioritized as a geographic site for economic development through partnerships~~

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with state, regional, and local organizations. The site must be reviewed by REDI and approved by the department for the purposes of locating a catalyst project.

(c)~~(e)~~ "Rural community" means:

1. A county with a population of 75,000 or less ~~fewer~~.

2. A county with a population of 125,000 or less ~~fewer~~ which is contiguous to a county with a population of 75,000 or less ~~fewer~~.

3. A municipality within a county described in subparagraph 1. or subparagraph 2.

4. An unincorporated federal enterprise community or an incorporated rural city with a population of 25,000 or less ~~fewer~~ and an employment base focused on traditional agricultural or resource-based industries, located in a county not defined as rural, which has at least three or more of the economic distress factors identified in paragraph (a) ~~(e)~~ and verified by the Office of Rural Prosperity ~~department~~.

For purposes of this paragraph, population must ~~shall~~ be determined in accordance with the most recent official estimate pursuant to s. 186.901.

(3) REDI shall be responsible for coordinating and focusing the efforts and resources of state and regional agencies on the problems which affect the fiscal, economic, and community viability of Florida's ~~economically distressed~~ rural communities, working with local governments, community-based organizations, and private organizations that have an interest in the growth and development of these communities to find ways to balance environmental and growth management issues with local

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needs.

(6)(a) By August 1 of each year, the head of each of the following agencies and organizations shall designate a deputy secretary or higher-level staff person from within the agency or organization to serve as the REDI representative for the agency or organization:

1. The Department of Transportation.
2. The Department of Environmental Protection.
3. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
4. The Department of State.
5. The Department of Health.
6. The Department of Children and Families.
7. The Department of Corrections.
8. The Department of Education.
9. The Department of Juvenile Justice.
10. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.
11. Each water management district.
12. CareerSource Florida, Inc.
13. VISIT Florida.
14. The Florida Regional Planning Council Association.
15. The Agency for Health Care Administration.
16. The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS).

(b) An alternate for each designee must ~~shall~~ also be chosen, who must also be a deputy secretary or higher-level staff person, and the names of the designees and alternates must ~~shall~~ be reported ~~sent~~ to the director of the Office of Rural Prosperity. At least one rural liaison from each regional rural community liaison center must participate in the REDI meetings ~~Secretary of Commerce.~~

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1741 (c) REDI shall meet at least each month but may meet more
1742 frequently if necessary. Each REDI representative, or his or her
1743 designee, shall be physically present or available by means of
1744 electronic communication for each meeting.

1745 (d)~~(b)~~ Each REDI representative shall ~~must~~ have
1746 comprehensive knowledge of his or her agency's functions, both
1747 regulatory and service in nature, and of the state's economic
1748 goals, policies, and programs. This person shall be the primary
1749 point of contact for his or her agency with REDI on issues and
1750 projects relating to ~~economically-distressed~~ rural communities
1751 and with regard to expediting project review, shall ensure a
1752 prompt effective response to problems arising with regard to
1753 rural issues, and shall work closely with the other REDI
1754 representatives in the identification of opportunities for
1755 preferential awards of program funds, contractual or other
1756 agreement provisions which meet the requirements of s. 215.971,
1757 and allowances and waiver of program requirements when necessary
1758 to encourage and facilitate rural growth, including, but not
1759 limited to, long-term private capital investment and job
1760 creation.

1761 (e)~~(e)~~ The REDI representatives shall work with REDI in the
1762 review and evaluation of statutes and rules for adverse impact
1763 on rural communities and the development of alternative
1764 proposals to mitigate that impact.

1765 (f)~~(d)~~ Each REDI representative shall be responsible for
1766 ensuring that each district office or facility of his or her
1767 agency is informed quarterly about the Rural Economic
1768 Development Initiative and for providing assistance throughout
1769 the agency in the implementation of REDI activities.

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(7)

(b) Designation as a rural area of opportunity under this subsection ~~is shall be~~ contingent upon the execution of a memorandum of agreement among the Office of Rural Prosperity ~~department~~; the governing body of the county; and the governing bodies of any municipalities to be included within a rural area of opportunity. Such agreement must ~~shall~~ specify the terms and conditions of the designation, including, but not limited to, the duties and responsibilities of the county and any participating municipalities to take actions designed to facilitate the retention and expansion of existing businesses in the area, as well as the recruitment of new businesses to the area.

~~(c) Each rural area of opportunity may designate catalyst projects, provided that each catalyst project is specifically recommended by REDI and confirmed as a catalyst project by the department. All state agencies and departments shall use all available tools and resources to the extent permissible by law to promote the creation and development of each catalyst project and the development of catalyst sites.~~

(8) REDI shall submit a report to the Office of Rural Prosperity ~~department~~ on all REDI activities for the previous fiscal year as a supplement to the office's ~~department's~~ annual report required under s. 288.013 ~~s. 20.60~~. This supplementary report must include:

(a) A status report on every project ~~all projects~~ currently being coordinated through REDI; 7 the number of preferential awards and allowances made pursuant to this section in detail by ~~award, allowance, or match type~~; 7 the dollar amount of such

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awards;⁷ and the names of the recipients.

(b) A description of all waivers of program requirements granted, including a list by program of each waiver that was granted. If waivers were requested but were not granted, a list of ungranted waivers, including reasons why the waivers were not granted, must be included.

(c) Detailed information as to the economic impact of the projects coordinated by REDI.

(d) Recommendations based on the review and evaluation of statutes and rules having an adverse impact on rural communities and proposals to mitigate such adverse impacts.

(e) Legislative recommendations for statutory waivers or reductions of specified economic development or other program requirements, including financial match waivers or reductions, for applicants within rural areas of opportunity.

(f) Outcomes of proposals submitted pursuant to s. 288.019.
Section 19. Section 288.06561, Florida Statutes, is repealed.

Section 20. Subsections (2), (3), and (4) of section 288.0657, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

288.0657 Florida rural economic development strategy grants.—

(2) The Office of Rural Prosperity shall provide ~~department may accept and administer moneys appropriated to the department for providing~~ grants to assist rural communities to develop and implement strategic economic development plans. Grants may be provided to assist with costs associated with marketing a site to business and site selectors for an economic development project that is part of an economic development plan, either as

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part of funding to develop and implement a plan or related to an already adopted plan.

(3) A rural community, an economic development organization in a rural area, or a regional organization representing at least one rural community or such economic development organizations may apply for such grants. The rural liaison for the rural community shall assist those applying for such grants.

(4) The office ~~department~~ shall establish criteria for reviewing grant applications. These criteria must ~~shall~~ include, but are not limited to, the degree of participation and commitment by the local community and the application's consistency with local comprehensive plans or the application's proposal to ensure such consistency. Grants for marketing may include funding for advertising campaign materials and costs associated with meetings, trade missions, and professional development related to site preparation and marketing. The office ~~department~~ shall review each application for a grant. ~~The department may approve grants only to the extent that funds are appropriated for such grants by the Legislature.~~

Section 21. Paragraph (a) of subsection (13) of section 288.1226, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

288.1226 Florida Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation; use of property; board of directors; duties; audit.—

(13) FOUR-YEAR MARKETING PLAN.—

(a) The corporation shall, in collaboration with the department, develop a 4-year marketing plan. At a minimum, the marketing plan must discuss the following:

1. Continuation of overall tourism growth in this state.
2. Expansion to new or under-represented tourist markets.

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3. Maintenance of traditional and loyal tourist markets.

4. Coordination of efforts with county destination marketing organizations, other local government marketing groups, privately owned attractions and destinations, and other private sector partners to create a seamless, four-season advertising campaign for the state and its regions.

5. Development of innovative techniques or promotions to build repeat visitation by targeted segments of the tourist population.

6. Consideration of innovative sources of state funding for tourism marketing.

7. Promotion of nature-based tourism, including, but not limited to, promotion of the Florida Greenways and Trails System as described under s. 260.014 and the Florida Shared-Use Nonmotorized Trail Network as described under s. 339.81.

8. Coordination of efforts with the Office of Greenways and Trails of the Department of Environmental Protection and the department to promote and assist local communities, including, but not limited to, communities designated as trail towns by the Office of Greenways and Trails, to maximize use of nearby trails as economic assets, including specific promotion of trail-based tourism.

9. Promotion of heritage tourism.

10. Development of a component to address emergency response to natural and manmade disasters from a marketing standpoint.

11. Provision of appropriate marketing assistance resources to small, rural, and agritourism businesses located in this state. Such resources may include, but are not limited to,

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marketing plans, marketing assistance, promotional support,
media development, technical expertise, marketing advice,
technology training, and social marketing support.

Section 22. Section 288.12266, Florida Statutes, is
repealed.

Section 23. Paragraph (f) of subsection (2) and paragraphs
(a), (b), and (c) of subsection (4) of section 288.9961, Florida
Statutes, are amended, and subsection (6) is added to that
section, to read:

288.9961 Promotion of broadband adoption; Florida Office of
Broadband.—

(2) DEFINITIONS.—As used in this section, the term:

(f) “Underserved” means a geographic area of this state in
which there is no provider of broadband Internet service that
offers a connection to the Internet with a capacity for
transmission at a consistent speed of at least 100 megabits per
second downstream and at least 20 ~~10~~ megabits per second
upstream.

(4) FLORIDA OFFICE OF BROADBAND.—The Florida Office of
Broadband is created within the Division of Community
Development in the department for the purpose of developing,
marketing, and promoting broadband Internet services in this
state. The office, in the performance of its duties, shall do
all of the following:

(a) Create a strategic plan that has goals and strategies
for increasing and improving the availability of, access to, and
use of broadband Internet service in this state. In development
of the plan, the department shall incorporate applicable federal
broadband activities, including any efforts or initiatives of

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the Federal Communications Commission, to improve broadband Internet service in this state. The plan must identify available federal funding sources for the expansion or improvement of broadband. The strategic plan must be submitted to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by June 30, 2022. The strategic plan must be updated biennially thereafter. The plan must include a process to review and verify public input regarding transmission speeds and availability of broadband Internet service throughout this state. The office shall consult with each regional rural community liaison center within the Office of Rural Prosperity on the development and update of the plan.

(b) Build and facilitate local technology planning teams or partnerships with members representing cross-sections of the community, which may include, but are not limited to, representatives from the following organizations and industries: libraries, K-12 education, colleges and universities, local health care providers, private businesses, community organizations, economic development organizations, local governments, tourism, parks and recreation, and agriculture. The local technology planning teams or partnerships shall work with rural communities to help the communities understand their current broadband availability, locate unserved and underserved businesses and residents, identify assets relevant to broadband deployment, build partnerships with broadband service providers, and identify opportunities to leverage assets and reduce barriers to the deployment of broadband Internet services in the community. The teams or partnerships must be proactive in rural communities as defined in s. 288.0656 ~~fiscally constrained~~

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1944 ~~counties~~ in identifying and providing assistance, in
1945 coordination with the regional rural community liaison centers
1946 within the Office of Rural Prosperity, with applying for federal
1947 grants for broadband Internet service.

1948 (c) Provide technical and planning assistance to rural
1949 communities in coordination with the regional rural community
1950 liaison centers within the Office of Rural Prosperity.

1951 (6) BROADBAND REPORTING.—

1952 (a) The office shall submit to the Governor, the President
1953 of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a
1954 quarterly report detailing the implementation of broadband
1955 activities in rural, unserved, and underserved communities. Such
1956 information must be listed by county and include the amount of
1957 state and federal funds allocated to and expended in the county
1958 by program; the progress toward deploying broadband in the
1959 county; any technical assistance provided; the activities of the
1960 local technology planning teams and partnerships; and the
1961 fulfillment of all other duties of the office required by this
1962 part.

1963 (b) By December 31 of each year, the office shall submit to
1964 the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of
1965 the House of Representatives an annual report on the office's
1966 operations and accomplishments for that calendar year and the
1967 status of broadband Internet service access and use in this
1968 state. The report must also incorporate the quarterly reports on
1969 rural, unserved, and underserved communities required by
1970 paragraph (a).

1971 Section 24. Section 290.06561, Florida Statutes, is
1972 repealed.

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Section 25. Paragraph (a) of subsection (5) of section 319.32, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

319.32 Fees; service charges; disposition.—

(5)(a) Forty-seven dollars of each fee collected, except for fees charged on a certificate of title for a motor vehicle for hire registered under s. 320.08(6), for each applicable original certificate of title and each applicable duplicate copy of a certificate of title shall be deposited as follows: into ~~the State Transportation Trust Fund. Deposits to the State Transportation Trust Fund pursuant to this paragraph may not exceed \$200 million in any fiscal year, and from any collections in excess of that amount during the fiscal year,~~

1. The first \$30 million collected shall be deposited into the Highway Safety Operating Trust Fund;7 and

2. Any remaining collections shall be paid into the State Transportation Trust ~~General Revenue~~ Fund.

Section 26. Subsection (40) is added to section 334.044, Florida Statutes, to read:

334.044 Powers and duties of the department.—The department shall have the following general powers and duties:

(40) To provide technical assistance and support from the appropriate district of the department to counties that are not located in a metropolitan planning organization created pursuant to s. 339.175.

Section 27. Section 339.0801, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

339.0801 Allocation of increased revenues derived from amendments to s. 319.32(5)(a) ~~by ch. 2012-128.~~—

(1) The first \$200 million of funds that result from

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increased revenues to the State Transportation Trust Fund derived from the amendments to s. 319.32(5)(a) made by s. 11, chapter 2012-128, Laws of Florida, ~~this act~~ must be used annually, first as set forth in paragraph (a) ~~subsection (1)~~ and then as set forth in paragraphs (b), (c), and (d) ~~subsections (2)-(4)~~, notwithstanding any other provision of law:

(a) 1. (1) (a) Beginning in the 2013-2014 fiscal year and annually for 30 years thereafter, \$10 million shall be for the purpose of funding any seaport project identified in the adopted work program of the Department of Transportation, to be known as the Seaport Investment Program.

2. (b) The revenues may be assigned, pledged, or set aside as a trust for the payment of principal or interest on revenue bonds, or other forms of indebtedness issued by an individual port or appropriate local government having jurisdiction thereof, or collectively by interlocal agreement among any of the ports, or used to purchase credit support to permit such borrowings. Alternatively, revenue bonds shall be issued by the Division of Bond Finance at the request of the Department of Transportation under the State Bond Act and shall be secured by such revenues as are provided in this subsection.

3. (c) Revenue bonds or other indebtedness issued hereunder are not a general obligation of the state and are secured solely by a first lien on the revenues distributed under this subsection.

4. (d) The state covenants with holders of the revenue bonds or other instruments of indebtedness issued pursuant to this subsection that it will not repeal this subsection; nor take any other action, including but not limited to amending this

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subsection, that will materially and adversely affect the rights of such holders so long as revenue bonds or other indebtedness authorized by this subsection are outstanding.

5.~~(e)~~ The proceeds of any revenue bonds or other indebtedness, after payment of costs of issuance and establishment of any required reserves, shall be invested in projects approved by the Department of Transportation and included in the department's adopted work program, by amendment if necessary. As required under s. 11(f), Art. VII of the State Constitution, the Legislature approves projects included in the department's adopted work program, including any projects added to the work program by amendment under s. 339.135(7).

6.~~(f)~~ Any revenues that are not used for the payment of bonds as authorized by this subsection may be used for purposes authorized under the Florida Seaport Transportation and Economic Development Program. This revenue source is in addition to any amounts provided for and appropriated in accordance with ss. 311.07 and 320.20(3) and (4).

(b)~~(2)~~ Beginning in the 2013-2014 fiscal year and annually thereafter, \$10 million shall be transferred to the Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund, to be used as specified in s. 427.0159.

(c)~~(3)~~ Beginning in the 2013-2014 fiscal year and annually thereafter, \$10 million shall be allocated to the Small County Outreach Program to be used as specified in s. 339.2818. These funds are in addition to the funds provided for the program pursuant to s. 201.15(4)(a)1.

(d)~~(4)~~ After the distributions required pursuant to paragraphs (a), (b), and (c) ~~subsections (1)-(3)~~, the remaining

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funds shall be used annually for transportation projects within this state for existing or planned strategic transportation projects which connect major markets within this state or between this state and other states, which focus on job creation, and which increase this state's viability in the national and global markets.

(2) The remaining funds that result from increased revenue to the State Transportation Trust Fund derived pursuant to s. 319.32(5)(a) must be used annually, notwithstanding any other law, beginning in the 2026-2027 fiscal year and annually thereafter, for the Small County Road Assistance Program as prescribed in s. 339.2816.

(3)~~(5)~~ Pursuant to s. 339.135(7), the department shall amend the work program to add the projects provided for in this section.

Section 28. Subsection (3) and paragraph (a) of subsection (4) of section 339.2816, Florida Statutes, are amended, and paragraph (c) of subsection (4) of that section is reenacted, to read:

339.2816 Small County Road Assistance Program.—

(3) Beginning with fiscal year ~~1999-2000 until fiscal year 2009-2010, and beginning again with fiscal year 2012-2013, up to~~ \$25 million annually from the State Transportation Trust Fund must ~~may~~ be used for the purposes of funding the Small County Road Assistance Program as described in this section. In addition, beginning with the fiscal year 2026-2027, the department must use the additional revenues allocated by s. 339.0801 for the program.

(4)(a) Small counties shall be eligible to compete for

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funds that have been designated for the Small County Road Assistance Program for resurfacing or reconstruction projects on county roads that were part of the county road system on June 10, 1995. Capacity improvements on county roads are ~~shall~~ not be eligible for funding under the program unless a safety issue exists or the department finds it necessary to widen existing lanes as part of a resurfacing or reconstruction project.

(c) The following criteria must be used to prioritize road projects for funding under the program:

1. The primary criterion is the physical condition of the road as measured by the department.

2. As secondary criteria the department may consider:

a. Whether a road is used as an evacuation route.

b. Whether a road has high levels of agricultural travel.

c. Whether a road is considered a major arterial route.

d. Whether a road is considered a feeder road.

e. Whether a road is located in a fiscally constrained county, as defined in s. 218.67(1).

f. Other criteria related to the impact of a project on the public road system or on the state or local economy as determined by the department.

Section 29. Subsection (3) of section 339.2817, Florida Statutes, is amended, and subsection (6) is added to that section, to read:

339.2817 County Incentive Grant Program.—

(3) The department shall ~~must~~ consider, but is not limited to, the following criteria for evaluation of projects for County Incentive Grant Program assistance:

(a) The extent to which the project will encourage,

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enhance, or create economic benefits;

(b) The likelihood that assistance would enable the project to proceed at an earlier date than the project could otherwise proceed;

(c) The extent to which assistance would foster innovative public-private partnerships and attract private debt or equity investment;

(d) The extent to which the project uses new technologies, including intelligent transportation systems, which enhance the efficiency of the project;

(e) The extent to which the project enhances connectivity between rural agricultural areas and market distribution centers;

(f) The extent to which the project helps to maintain or protect the environment; and

(g) ~~(f)~~ The extent to which the project includes transportation benefits for improving intermodalism and safety.

(6) Beginning in the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the department shall give priority to a county located, either wholly or partially, within the Everglades Agricultural Area as defined in s. 373.4592(15) which, notwithstanding subsection (4), requests 100 percent of the project costs for an eligible project that meets the criteria established in subsection (3). Requests under this subsection are limited to \$15 million annually. This subsection expires July 1, 2032.

Section 30. Subsections (1), (2), (3), (6), (7), and (8) of section 339.2818, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

339.2818 Small County Outreach Program.—

(1) There is created within the department ~~of~~

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2147 ~~Transportation~~ the Small County Outreach Program. The purpose of
2148 this program is to assist small county governments in repairing
2149 or rehabilitating county bridges, paving unpaved roads,
2150 addressing road-related drainage improvements, resurfacing or
2151 reconstructing county roads, or constructing capacity or safety
2152 improvements to county roads.

2153 (2) For the purposes of this section, the term "small
2154 county" means any county that has a population of 200,000 or
2155 less as determined by the most recent official population census
2156 determination estimate pursuant to s. 186.901.

2157 ~~(3) Funds allocated under this program, pursuant to s. 4,~~
2158 ~~ch. 2000-257, Laws of Florida, are in addition to any funds~~
2159 ~~provided pursuant to s. 339.2816, for the Small County Road~~
2160 ~~Assistance Program.~~

2161 (5)~~(6)~~ Funds paid into the State Transportation Trust Fund
2162 pursuant to ss. 201.15, 320.072, and 339.0801 ~~s. 201.15~~ for the
2163 purposes of the Small County Outreach Program are hereby
2164 annually appropriated for expenditure to support the Small
2165 County Outreach Program.

2166 (6)~~(7)~~ Subject to a specific appropriation in addition to
2167 funds annually appropriated for projects under this section, a
2168 municipality within a rural area of opportunity or a rural area
2169 of opportunity community designated under s. 288.0656(7)(a) may
2170 compete for the additional project funding using the criteria
2171 listed in subsection (3) ~~(4)~~ at up to 100 percent of project
2172 costs, excluding capacity improvement projects.

2173 ~~(8) Subject to a specific appropriation in addition to~~
2174 ~~funds appropriated for projects under this section, a local~~
2175 ~~government either wholly or partially within the Everglades~~

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~~Agricultural Area as defined in s. 373.4592(15), the Peace River Basin, or the Suwannee River Basin may compete for additional funding using the criteria listed in paragraph (4)(c) at up to 100 percent of project costs on state or county roads used primarily as farm-to-market connections between rural agricultural areas and market distribution centers, excluding capacity improvement projects.~~

Section 31. Section 339.68, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

(Substantial rewording of section.)

See s. 339.68, F.S., for present text.)

339.68 Florida Arterial Road Modernization Program.—

(1) The Legislature finds that increasing demands continue to be placed on rural arterial roads in this state by a fast-growing economy, continued population growth, and increased tourism. Investment in the rural arterial roads of this state is needed to maintain the safety, mobility, reliability, and resiliency of the transportation system in order to support the movement of people, goods, and commodities; to enhance economic prosperity and competitiveness; and to enrich the quality of life of the rural communities and the environment of this state.

(2) The Florida Arterial Road Modernization Program is created within the department to make capacity and safety improvements to two-lane arterial roads or connect existing arterial roads located in rural communities. For purposes of this section, the term "rural community" has the same meaning as in s. 288.0656.

(3) Beginning in the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the department shall allocate from the State Transportation Trust Fund a

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2205 minimum of \$50 million in each fiscal year for purposes of
2206 funding the program. This funding is in addition to any other
2207 funding provided to the program by any other law.

2208 (4) The department shall use the following criteria to
2209 prioritize projects for funding under the program:

2210 (a) Whether the road has documented safety concerns or
2211 requires additional safety and design improvements. This may be
2212 evidenced by the number of fatalities or crashes per vehicle
2213 mile traveled.

2214 (b) Whether the road has or is projected to have a
2215 significant amount of truck tractor traffic as determined by the
2216 department. For purposes of this paragraph, the term "truck
2217 tractor" has the same meaning as in s. 320.01(11).

2218 (c) Whether the road is used to transport agricultural
2219 products and commodities from a farm to the market or other sale
2220 or distribution point.

2221 (d) Whether the road is used to transport goods to or from
2222 warehouses, distribution centers, or intermodal logistics
2223 centers as defined in s. 311.101(2).

2224 (e) Whether the road is used as an evacuation route.

2225 (f) Whether the physical condition of the road meets
2226 department standards.

2227 (g) Whether the road currently has, or is projected to have
2228 within the next 5 years, a level of service of D, E, or F.

2229 (h) Any other criteria related to the impact of a project
2230 on the public road system or on the state or local economy as
2231 determined by the department.

2232 (5) By January 3, 2028, and every 2 years thereafter, the
2233 department shall submit to the Governor, the President of the

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Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a report regarding the use and condition of arterial roads located in rural communities, which report must include all of the following:

(a) A map of roads located in rural communities which are designated as arterial roads.

(b) A needs assessment that must include, but is not limited to, consideration of infrastructure improvements to improve capacity on arterial roads in rural communities.

(c) A synopsis of the department's project prioritization process.

(d) An estimate of the local and state economic impact of improving capacity on arterial roads in rural communities.

(e) A listing of the arterial roads and the associated improvements to be included in the program and a schedule or timeline for the inclusion of such projects in the work program.

Section 32. (1) The Department of Transportation shall allocate the additional funds provided by this act to implement the Small County Road Assistance Program as created by s. 339.2816, Florida Statutes, and amend the current tentative work program for the 2026-2027 through 2032-2033 fiscal years to include additional projects. In addition, before adoption of the work program, the department shall submit a budget amendment pursuant to s. 339.135(7), Florida Statutes, requesting budget authority necessary to implement the additional projects.

(2) The department shall allocate sufficient funds to implement the Florida Arterial Road Modernization Program as created by s. 339.68, Florida Statutes, develop a plan to expend the revenues as specified in s. 339.68, Florida Statutes, and,

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before its adoption, amend the current tentative work program for the 2026-2027 through 2032-2033 fiscal years to include the program's projects. In addition, before adoption of the work program, the department shall submit a budget amendment pursuant to s. 339.135(7), Florida Statutes, requesting budget authority necessary to implement the program as specified in s. 339.68, Florida Statutes.

(3) Notwithstanding any other law, the increase in revenue to the State Transportation Trust Fund derived from the amendments to ss. 201.15 and 319.32, Florida Statutes, made by this act and deposited into the trust fund pursuant to ss. 201.15 and 339.0801, Florida Statutes, must be used by the department to fund the programs as specified in this section.

Section 33. Section 341.0525, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

341.0525 Rural transit operating block grant program; administration; eligible projects.—

(1) There is created a rural transit operating block grant program to be administered by the department. Rural transit block grant funds are available only to public transit providers not eligible to receive public transit block grants pursuant to s. 341.052.

(2) At least \$3 million must be allocated annually from the State Transportation Trust Fund for the program. At least \$20,000 must be distributed to each eligible provider if application of the following formula provides less than that amount for any such provider:

(a) One-third must be distributed according to the percentage that an eligible provider's nonurbanized county

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population in the most recent year official population estimate pursuant to s. 186.901 is of the total population of all counties served by eligible providers.

(b) One-third must be distributed according to the percentage that the total nonurbanized revenue miles provided by an eligible provider, as verified by the most recent National Transit Database report or a similar audited report submitted to the department, is of the total rural revenue miles provided by eligible providers in the state in that year.

(c) One-third must be distributed according to the percentage that the total nonurbanized passengers carried by an eligible provider, as verified by the most recent National Transit Database report or a similar audited report submitted to the department, is of the total number of passengers carried by eligible providers in the state in that year.

(3) Grant funds must be used to pay public transit operating costs. State participation in such costs may not exceed 50 percent of such costs or an amount equal to the total revenue, excluding farebox, charter, and advertising revenue and federal funds, received by the provider for operating costs, whichever amount is less.

(4) (a) An eligible provider may not use block grant funds to supplant local tax revenues made available to such provider for operations in the previous year; however, the Secretary of Transportation may waive this provision for public transit providers located in a county recovering from a state of emergency declared pursuant to part I of chapter 252.

(b) The state may not give any county more than 39 percent of the funds available for distribution under this section or

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2321 more than the amount local revenue sources provide to that
2322 county for its transit system.

2323 (5) To remain eligible to receive funding under the
2324 program, eligible providers must comply with s. 341.071(1) and
2325 (2).

2326 (6)(a) Any funds distributed to an eligible provider
2327 pursuant to subsection (2) which cannot be expended within the
2328 limitations of the program must be returned to the department
2329 for redistribution to other eligible providers.

2330 (b) The department may consult with an eligible provider,
2331 before distributing funds to that provider, to determine whether
2332 the provider can expend its total block grant within the
2333 limitations of the program. If the department and the provider
2334 agree that the total block grant amount cannot be expended, the
2335 provider may agree to accept a block grant amount of less than
2336 the total amount, in which case the funds that exceed such
2337 lesser agreed-upon amount must be redistributed to other
2338 eligible providers.

2339 (c) If an audit reveals that an eligible provider expended
2340 block grant funds on unauthorized uses, the provider must repay
2341 to the department an amount equal to the funds expended for
2342 unauthorized uses. The department shall redistribute such
2343 repayments to other eligible providers.

2344 Section 34. Paragraph (b) of subsection (3) of section
2345 381.402, Florida Statutes, is amended, and paragraph (h) is
2346 added to subsection (2) of that section, to read:

2347 381.402 Florida Reimbursement Assistance for Medical
2348 Education Program.—

2349 (2) The following licensed or certified health care

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practitioners are eligible to participate in the program:

(h) Medical doctors or doctors of osteopathic medicine who are board certified or board eligible in emergency medicine and employed by or under contract with a rural hospital as defined in s. 395.602(2)(b) or a rural emergency hospital as defined in s. 395.607(1)(a) to provide medical care in the rural hospital's or rural emergency hospital's emergency department.

Primary care medical specialties for physicians include obstetrics, gynecology, general and family practice, geriatrics, internal medicine, pediatrics, psychiatry, and other specialties which may be identified by the Department of Health.

(3) From the funds available, the Department of Health shall make payments as follows:

(b) All payments are contingent on continued proof of:

1.a. Primary care practice in a rural hospital as defined in s. 395.602(2)(b) or an underserved area designated by the Department of Health, provided the practitioner accepts Medicaid reimbursement if eligible for such reimbursement; ~~or~~

b. Emergency medicine practice in a rural hospital as defined in s. 395.602(2)(b) or rural emergency hospital as defined in s. 395.607(1)(a), provided the practitioner accepts Medicaid reimbursement if eligible for such reimbursement; or

c. For practitioners other than physicians, practice in other settings, including, but not limited to, a nursing home facility as defined in s. 400.021, a home health agency as defined in s. 400.462, or an intermediate care facility for the developmentally disabled as defined in s. 400.960. Any such setting must be located in, or serve residents or patients in,

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an underserved area designated by the Department of Health and must provide services to Medicaid patients.

2. Providing 25 hours annually of volunteer ~~primary care~~ services within the practitioner's scope of practice in a free clinic as specified in s. 766.1115(3)(d)14. or through another volunteer program operated ~~by the state~~ pursuant to part IV of chapter 110 and approved by the department. In order to meet the requirements of this subparagraph, the volunteer hours must be verifiable in a manner determined by the department.

Section 35. Section 381.403, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

381.403 Rural Access to Primary and Preventive Care Grant Program.—The Legislature recognizes that access to primary and preventive health care is critical for the well-being of the residents of this state. The Legislature also recognizes that many rural areas of this state have significantly fewer available physicians, physician assistants, and autonomous advanced practice registered nurses who serve those areas. To increase the availability of health care in such underserved rural areas, there is created the Rural Access to Primary and Preventive Care Grant Program within the Department of Health to use grants to incentivize the creation or expansion of health care practices in those areas.

(1) As used in this section, the term:

(a) "Autonomous advanced practice registered nurse" means an advanced practice registered nurse who is registered under s. 464.0123 to engage in autonomous practice.

(b) "Majority ownership" means ownership of more than 50 percent of the interests in a private practice.

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(c) "Physician" means a physician licensed under chapter 458 or chapter 459.

(d) "Physician assistant" means a physician assistant licensed under chapter 458 or chapter 459 to perform medical services delegated by a supervising physician.

(e) "Preventive care" means routine health care services designed to prevent illness. The term includes, but is not limited to, general physical examinations provided on an annual basis, screenings for acute or chronic illnesses, and patient counseling to promote overall wellness and avoid the need for emergency services.

(f) "Primary care" means health care services focused primarily on preventive care, wellness care, and treatment for common illnesses. The term may include the health care provider serving as a patient's entry point into the overall health care system and coordinating a patient's care among specialists or acute care settings. The term does not include elective services provided solely for cosmetic purposes.

(g) "Program" means the Rural Access to Primary and Preventive Care Grant Program.

(h) "Qualifying rural area" means a rural community as defined in s. 288.0657 in this state which is also designated as a health professional shortage area by the Health Resources and Services Administration of the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

(2) The department shall award grants under the program to physicians, physician assistants, and autonomous advanced practice registered nurses who intend to open a new private practice in a qualifying rural area or who intend to open a new

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location within a qualifying rural area if the current private practice is located in a different county. To qualify for a grant, an applicant must meet all of the following criteria:

(a) The practice must:

1. Have majority ownership by physicians, physician assistants, or autonomous advanced practice registered nurses, or a combination thereof.

2. Be physically located in a qualifying rural area and, at that location, serve patients who live in that qualifying rural area or in other nearby qualifying rural areas. The practice may also serve patients who reside outside of the qualifying rural area. While the practice may use telehealth to supplement the services provided at the location, the majority of services provided by the practice must be provided in-person at the physical location.

3. Accept Medicaid patients.

4. Provide services solely in primary care or preventative care, except that a physician, and any nurse licensed under chapter 464 or any physician assistant supervised by the physician, may provide services at the practice in primary care or preventative care, or services that are within the practitioner's scope of practice, based on the physician's board-certified specialty in obstetrics, gynecology, general and family practice, geriatrics, internal medicine, pediatrics, or psychiatry.

(b) The owners of the practice must commit to providing the following information to the department on an annual basis, and upon request by the department, for the duration of the contract entered into pursuant to subsection (6):

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2466 1. Deidentified patient encounter data.

2467 2. A detailed report on the use of grant funds until such
2468 funds are expended.

2469 (3) By March 1, 2027, the department shall create an
2470 application process for eligible physicians, physician
2471 assistants, and autonomous advanced practice registered nurses
2472 to apply for grants under the program. The application must
2473 require a detailed budget of anticipated use of grant funds and
2474 an explanation of the manner in which the new or existing
2475 practice will meet the requirements of subsection (2). The
2476 department shall establish a ranking system to determine which
2477 applicants will be awarded grants if there are more applicants
2478 for the program than can be awarded grants with available
2479 appropriated funds.

2480 (4) Subject to specific appropriation, the department may
2481 award grants of up to \$250,000 to eligible applicants. Only one
2482 grant may be awarded per practice. Grant funds awarded for
2483 establishing a new private practice or a new practice location
2484 may be used for any of the following expenses:

2485 (a) Facility construction, acquisition, renovation, or
2486 lease.

2487 (b) Purchasing medical equipment.

2488 (c) Purchasing or implementing information technology
2489 equipment or services.

2490 (d) Purchasing or implementing telehealth technology.

2491 (e) Training on the use of medical equipment, information
2492 technology, or telehealth technology implemented under paragraph
2493 (b), paragraph (c), or paragraph (d), respectively.

2494 (5) Grant funds may not be used for any of the following:

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(a) Salaries.

(b) Utilities.

(c) Internet or telecommunications services other than those necessary for implementing telehealth technology under paragraph (4) (d).

(d) Insurance.

(e) Incidental maintenance and repairs.

(f) Disposable medical supplies.

(g) Medicines or vaccines.

(h) Licensing or certification fees, including costs for continuing education other than training under paragraph (4) (e).

(6) The department shall enter into a contract with each grant recipient which details the requirements for the expenditure of grant funds by that recipient. The contract must include, at a minimum, all of the following:

(a) The purpose of the contract.

(b) Specific performance standards and responsibilities for the recipient under the contract, including penalties for not meeting such performance standards and responsibilities.

(c) A detailed project or contract budget, if applicable.

(d) Reporting requirements for grant recipients to provide information to the department under paragraph (2) (b) as well as any additional information the department deems necessary for the administration of the program.

(7) The department may adopt rules to implement the program.

(8) Beginning July 1, 2027, and each year thereafter in which there are outstanding contracts with grant recipients under subsection (6), the department shall provide a report to

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the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives which includes, but need not be limited to, all of the following:

(a) Each grant awarded, including the proposed uses for each grant.

(b) The progress on each outstanding contract.

(c) The number of patients residing in rural areas who were served by grant awardees.

(d) The number of Medicaid recipients who were served by grant awardees.

(e) The number and types of services provided during patient encounters in locations opened under the program.

(f) The number of health care practitioners, delineated by licensure type, providing services in locations opened under the program.

(9) This section is repealed July 1, 2036, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature.

Section 36. Section 381.9856, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

381.9856 Stroke, Cardiac, and Obstetric Response and Education Grant Program.—

(1) PROGRAM CREATION.—The Stroke, Cardiac, and Obstetric Response and Education (SCORE) Grant Program is created within the Department of Health.

(2) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the program is to improve patient outcomes and the coordination of emergency medical care in rural communities by increasing access to high-quality stroke, cardiac, and obstetric care through the application of technology and innovative training, such as blended learning

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2553 training programs. Blended learning training programs ensure
2554 that participants gain both the theoretical foundations of
2555 diagnosis and management as well as real-world clinical
2556 experience through scenario-based learning, ultimately enhancing
2557 decisionmaking and patient outcomes.

2558 (3) DEFINITIONS.—As used in this section, the term:

2559 (a) “Blended learning training program” means a structured
2560 educational model that uses blended learning methodologies,
2561 including simulation-based training, virtual reality, and
2562 distance learning technologies, in conjunction with hands-on
2563 instruction, such as simulation-based practice, and in-person
2564 skills sessions to provide comprehensive education.

2565 (b) “High-risk care provider” means a licensed health care
2566 facility or licensed ambulance service that regularly provides
2567 emergency or ongoing care to patients experiencing a stroke,
2568 heart attack, or pregnancy-related emergency.

2569 (c) “Rural community” has the same meaning as provided in
2570 s. 288.0657.

2571 (4) GRANT PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.—

2572 (a) The department shall award grants to high-risk care
2573 providers serving rural communities to accomplish at least one
2574 of the following initiatives:

2575 1. Implement a blended learning training program for health
2576 care providers in stroke care protocols and best practices.

2577 2. Purchase simulation equipment and technology for
2578 training.

2579 3. Establish telehealth capabilities between prehospital
2580 providers, such as paramedics or emergency medical technicians,
2581 and in-hospital providers, such as neurologists, to expedite

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emergency stroke care, emergency cardiac care, or emergency
obstetric care.

4. Develop quality improvement programs in one or more of
the following specialty areas: emergency stroke care, emergency
cardiac care, or emergency obstetric care.

(b) Priority must be given to proposals that:

1. Demonstrate collaboration between prehospital and in-
hospital providers; or

2. Show potential for significant improvement in patient
outcomes in rural communities.

(5) FUNDING LIMITS; REPORTING.—

(a) Individual grants may not exceed \$100,000 per year.

(b) Grant recipients must submit quarterly reports to the
department documenting program activities, expenditures, and
outcomes.

(6) ADMINISTRATION.—The department shall monitor program
implementation and outcomes. The department shall also submit an
annual report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and
the Speaker of the House of Representatives by December 1 of
each year, detailing program implementation and outcomes.

(7) RULEMAKING.—The department may adopt rules to implement
this section.

(8) IMPLEMENTATION.—This section may be implemented only to
the extent specifically funded by legislative appropriation.

(9) REPEAL.—This section is repealed July 1, 2031, unless
reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the
Legislature.

Section 37. Subsection (2) of section 395.6061, Florida
Statutes, is amended to read:

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395.6061 Rural hospital capital improvement.—There is established a rural hospital capital improvement grant program.

(2)(a) Each rural hospital as defined in s. 395.602 shall receive a minimum of \$100,000 annually, subject to legislative appropriation, upon application to the Department of Health, for projects to acquire, repair, improve, or upgrade systems, facilities, or equipment. Such projects may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Establishing mobile care units to provide primary care services, behavioral health services, or obstetric and gynecological services in rural health professional shortage areas.

2. Establishing telehealth kiosks to provide urgent care and primary care services remotely in rural health professional shortage areas.

(b) As used in this subsection, the term:

1. "Preventive care" means routine health care services designed to prevent illness. The term includes, but is not limited to, general physical examinations provided on an annual basis, screenings for acute or chronic illnesses, and patient counseling to promote overall wellness and avoid the need for emergency services.

2. "Primary care" means health care services focused primarily on preventive care, wellness care, and treatment for common illnesses. The term may include the health care provider serving as a patient's entry point into the overall health care system and coordinating a patient's care among specialists or acute care settings. The term does not include elective services provided solely for cosmetic purposes.

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2640 3. "Rural health professional shortage area" means a rural
2641 community as defined in s. 288.0657 which is also designated as
2642 a health professional shortage area by the Health Resources and
2643 Services Administration of the United States Department of
2644 Health and Human Services.

2645 Section 38. Subsection (3) of section 420.9073, Florida
2646 Statutes, is amended to read:

2647 420.9073 Local housing distributions.—

2648 (3) Calculation of guaranteed amounts:

2649 (a) The guaranteed amount under subsection (1) shall be
2650 calculated for each state fiscal year by multiplying \$1 million
2651 ~~\$350,000~~ by a fraction, the numerator of which is the amount of
2652 funds distributed to the Local Government Housing Trust Fund
2653 pursuant to s. 201.15(4)(c) and the denominator of which is the
2654 total amount of funds distributed to the Local Government
2655 Housing Trust Fund pursuant to s. 201.15.

2656 (b) The guaranteed amount under subsection (2) shall be
2657 calculated for each state fiscal year by multiplying \$1 million
2658 ~~\$350,000~~ by a fraction, the numerator of which is the amount of
2659 funds distributed to the Local Government Housing Trust Fund
2660 pursuant to s. 201.15(4)(d) and the denominator of which is the
2661 total amount of funds distributed to the Local Government
2662 Housing Trust Fund pursuant to s. 201.15.

2663 Section 39. Paragraph (n) of subsection (5) of section
2664 420.9075, Florida Statutes, is amended, paragraph (o) is added
2665 to that subsection, and paragraph (b) of subsection (13) of that
2666 section is reenacted, to read:

2667 420.9075 Local housing assistance plans; partnerships.—

2668 (5) The following criteria apply to awards made to eligible

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sponsors or eligible persons for the purpose of providing eligible housing:

(n) Funds from the local housing distribution not used to meet the criteria established in paragraph (a), ~~or~~ paragraph (c), or paragraph (o) or not used for the administration of a local housing assistance plan must be used for housing production and finance activities, including, but not limited to, financing preconstruction activities or the purchase of existing units, providing rental housing, and providing home ownership training to prospective home buyers and owners of homes assisted through the local housing assistance plan.

1. Notwithstanding ~~the provisions of~~ paragraphs (a) and (c), program income as defined in s. 420.9071(26) may also be used to fund activities described in this paragraph.

2. When preconstruction due-diligence activities conducted as part of a preservation strategy show that preservation of the units is not feasible and will not result in the production of an eligible unit, such costs must ~~shall~~ be deemed a program expense rather than an administrative expense if such program expenses do not exceed 3 percent of the annual local housing distribution.

3. If both an award under the local housing assistance plan and federal low-income housing tax credits are used to assist a project and there is a conflict between the criteria prescribed in this subsection and the requirements of s. 42 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, the county or eligible municipality may resolve the conflict by giving precedence to the requirements of s. 42 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, in lieu of following the criteria prescribed in this

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subsection with the exception of paragraphs (a) and (g) of this subsection.

4. Each county and each eligible municipality may award funds as a grant for construction, rehabilitation, or repair as part of disaster recovery or emergency repairs or to remedy accessibility or health and safety deficiencies. Any other grants must be approved as part of the local housing assistance plan.

(o) Notwithstanding paragraphs (a) and (c), up to 25 percent of the funds made available in each county and eligible municipality from the local housing distribution may be used to preserve multifamily affordable rental housing funded through United States Department of Agriculture loans. These funds may be used to rehabilitate housing, extend affordability periods, or acquire or transfer properties in partnership with private organizations. This paragraph expires on June 30, 2032.

(13)

(b) If, as a result of its review of the annual report, the corporation determines that a county or eligible municipality has failed to implement a local housing incentive strategy, or, if applicable, a local housing incentive plan, it shall send a notice of termination of the local government's share of the local housing distribution by certified mail to the affected county or eligible municipality.

1. The notice must specify a date of termination of the funding if the affected county or eligible municipality does not implement the plan or strategy and provide for a local response. A county or eligible municipality shall respond to the corporation within 30 days after receipt of the notice of

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2727 termination.

2728 2. The corporation shall consider the local response that
2729 extenuating circumstances precluded implementation and grant an
2730 extension to the timeframe for implementation. Such an extension
2731 shall be made in the form of an extension agreement that
2732 provides a timeframe for implementation. The chief elected
2733 official of a county or eligible municipality or his or her
2734 designee shall have the authority to enter into the agreement on
2735 behalf of the local government.

2736 3. If the county or the eligible municipality has not
2737 implemented the incentive strategy or entered into an extension
2738 agreement by the termination date specified in the notice, the
2739 local housing distribution share terminates, and any uncommitted
2740 local housing distribution funds held by the affected county or
2741 eligible municipality in its local housing assistance trust fund
2742 shall be transferred to the Local Government Housing Trust Fund
2743 to the credit of the corporation to administer.

2744 4.a. If the affected local government fails to meet the
2745 timeframes specified in the agreement, the corporation shall
2746 terminate funds. The corporation shall send a notice of
2747 termination of the local government's share of the local housing
2748 distribution by certified mail to the affected local government.
2749 The notice shall specify the termination date, and any
2750 uncommitted funds held by the affected local government shall be
2751 transferred to the Local Government Housing Trust Fund to the
2752 credit of the corporation to administer.

2753 b. If the corporation terminates funds to a county, but an
2754 eligible municipality receiving a local housing distribution
2755 pursuant to an interlocal agreement maintains compliance with

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program requirements, the corporation shall thereafter distribute directly to the participating eligible municipality its share calculated in the manner provided in ss. 420.9072 and 420.9073.

c. Any county or eligible municipality whose local distribution share has been terminated may subsequently elect to receive directly its local distribution share by adopting the ordinance, resolution, and local housing assistance plan in the manner and according to the procedures provided in ss. 420.907-420.9079.

Section 40. Subsections (1), (2), and (5) of section 1001.451, Florida Statutes, are amended, and subsection (6) is added to that section, to read:

1001.451 Regional consortium service organizations.—In order to provide a full range of programs to larger numbers of students, minimize duplication of services, and encourage the development of new programs and services:

(1) School districts with 20,000 or fewer unweighted full-time equivalent students, developmental research (laboratory) schools established pursuant to s. 1002.32, and the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind may enter into cooperative agreements to form a regional consortium service organization. Each regional consortium service organization shall provide any ~~at a minimum, three~~ of the following services determined necessary and appropriate by the board of directors:

(a) Exceptional student education;

(b) Safe schools support ~~teacher education centers;~~
~~environmental education;~~

(c) State and federal grant procurement and coordination;

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- (d) Data services processing; ~~health~~
(e) Insurance services;
(f) Risk management insurance;
(g) Professional learning;
(h) College, career, and workforce development;
(i) Business and operational services ~~staff development~~;
(j) Purchasing; or
(k) Planning and accountability.

(2)(a) Each regional consortium service organization composed that consists of four or more school districts is eligible to receive, through the Department of Education, subject to the funds provided in the General Appropriations Act, an allocation incentive grant of \$150,000 ~~\$50,000~~ per school district and eligible member to be used for the delivery of services within the participating school districts. The determination of services and use of such funds must ~~shall~~ be established by the board of directors of the regional consortium service organization. The funds must ~~shall~~ be distributed to each regional consortium service organization no later than 30 days following the release of the funds to the department. Each regional consortium service organization shall submit an annual report to the department regarding the use of funds for consortia services. Unexpended amounts in any fund in a consortium's current year operating budget must be carried forward and included as the balance forward for that fund in the approved operating budget for the following year. Each regional consortium service organization shall provide quarterly financial reports to member districts.

- (b) Member districts shall designate a district to serve as

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2814 a fiscal agent for contractual and reporting purposes. Such
2815 fiscal agent district is entitled to reasonable compensation for
2816 accounting and other services performed. The regional consortium
2817 service organization shall retain all funds received from grants
2818 or contracted services to cover indirect or administrative costs
2819 associated with the provision of such services. The regional
2820 consortium service organization board of directors shall
2821 determine the products and services to be provided by the
2822 consortium; however, in all contractual matters, the school
2823 board of the fiscal agent district shall act on proposed actions
2824 of the regional consortium service organization.

2825 (c) The regional consortium service organization board of
2826 directors shall recommend establishment of positions and
2827 individuals for appointment to the fiscal agent district.
2828 Personnel must be employed under the personnel policies of the
2829 fiscal agent district and are deemed to be public employees of
2830 the fiscal agent district. The regional consortium service
2831 organization board of directors may recommend a salary schedule
2832 and job descriptions specific to its personnel.

2833 (d) The regional consortium service organization may
2834 purchase or lease property and facilities essential for its
2835 operations and is responsible for their maintenance and
2836 associated overhead costs.

2837 (e) If a regional consortium service organization is
2838 dissolved, any revenue from the sale of assets must be
2839 distributed among the member districts as determined by the
2840 board of directors ~~Application for incentive grants shall be~~
2841 ~~made to the Commissioner of Education by July 30 of each year~~
2842 ~~for distribution to qualifying regional consortium service~~

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organizations by January 1 of the fiscal year.

(5) The board of directors of a regional consortium service organization may use various means to generate revenue in support of its activities, including, but not limited to, contracting for services to nonmember districts. The board of directors may acquire, enjoy, use, and dispose of patents, copyrights, and trademarks and any licenses and associated ~~other~~ rights or interests ~~thereunder or therein~~. Ownership of all such patents, copyrights, trademarks, licenses, and associated rights or interests ~~thereunder or therein~~ shall vest in the state, with the board of directors having full right of use and full right to retain associated ~~the~~ revenues ~~derived therefrom~~. Any funds realized from contracted services, patents, copyrights, trademarks, or licenses are ~~shall be~~ considered internal funds as provided in s. 1011.07. A fund balance must be established for maintaining or expanding services, facilities maintenance, terminal pay, and other liabilities ~~Such funds shall be used to support the organization's marketing and research and development activities in order to improve and increase services to its member districts.~~

(6) A regional consortium service organization is authorized to administer the Regional Consortia Service Organization Supplemental Services Program under s. 1001.4511.

Section 41. Section 1001.4511, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

1001.4511 Regional Consortia Service Organization Supplemental Services Program.—

(1) There is created the Regional Consortia Service Organization Supplemental Services Program to increase the

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ability of regional consortium service organizations under s. 1001.451 to provide programs and services to consortia members through cooperative agreements. Program funds may be used to supplement member needs related to transportation; district finance personnel services; property insurance, including property insurance obtained from any source; cybersecurity support; school safety; college, career, and workforce development; academic support; and behavior support within exceptional student education services.

(2) Each regional consortium service organization shall annually report to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives the distribution of funds, including members awarded and services provided.

(3) Notwithstanding s. 216.301 and pursuant to s. 216.351, funds allocated for this purpose which are not disbursed by June 30 of the fiscal year in which the funds are allocated may be carried forward for up to 5 years after the effective date of the original appropriation.

Section 42. Section 1009.635, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

1009.635 Rural Incentive for Professional Educators Program.—

(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Rural Incentive for Professional Educators (RIPE) Program is established within the Department of Education to support the recruitment and retention of qualified instructional personnel in rural communities. The program shall provide financial assistance for the repayment of student loans for eligible participants who establish permanent residency and employment in rural areas of opportunity.

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2901 (2) ELIGIBILITY.—An individual is eligible to participate
2902 in the RIPE Program if he or she does all of the following:

2903 (a) Establishes permanent residency on or after July 1,
2904 2026, in a rural area of opportunity as designated pursuant to
2905 s. 288.0656. The address on an individual's state-issued
2906 identification card or driver license is evidence of residence.

2907 (b) Secures full-time employment as a teacher or
2908 administrator in a private school as defined in s. 1002.01, or
2909 as instructional or administrative personnel as those terms are
2910 defined in s. 1012.01(2) and (3), respectively, in the public
2911 school district located within the same rural area of
2912 opportunity as he or she resides.

2913 (c) Holds an associate degree, bachelor's degree,
2914 postgraduate degree, or certificate from an accredited
2915 institution earned before establishing residency.

2916 (d) Has an active student loan balance incurred for the
2917 completion of the qualifying degree or certificate.

2918 (3) LOAN REPAYMENT.—Eligible participants may receive up to
2919 \$15,000 in total student loan repayment assistance over 5 years,
2920 disbursed in annual payments not to exceed \$3,000 per year.
2921 Payments must be made directly to the lender servicing the
2922 participant's student loan.

2923 (4) AWARD DISTRIBUTION.—Before disbursement of an award,
2924 the department shall verify that the participant:

2925 (a) Has maintained continuous employment with the school
2926 district in an instructional or administrative position;

2927 (b) Has received a rating of effective or highly effective
2928 pursuant to s. 1012.34; and

2929 (c) Has not been placed on probation, had his or her

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certificate suspended or revoked, or been placed on the
disqualification list, pursuant to s. 1012.796.

(5) ADMINISTRATION.—The program shall be administered by
the Office of Student Financial Assistance within the Department
of Education, which shall:

(a) Develop application procedures requiring documentation,
including proof of residency, verification of employment,
official academic transcripts, and details of outstanding
student loans; and

(b) Monitor compliance with program requirements.

(6) RULEMAKING.—The State Board of Education shall adopt
rules no later than January 31, 2027, to administer this
section.

Section 43. Subsection (3) of section 1013.62, Florida
Statutes, is amended to read:

1013.62 Charter schools capital outlay funding.—

(3) If the school board levies the discretionary millage
authorized in s. 1011.71(2), the department must ~~shall~~ use the
following calculation methodology to determine the amount of
revenue that a school district must distribute to each eligible
charter school:

(a) Reduce the total discretionary millage revenue by the
school district's annual debt service obligation incurred as of
March 1, 2017, which has not been subsequently retired, and:

1. Beginning in the 2026-2027 fiscal year, for any district
with an active project or an outstanding participation
requirement balance, any amount of participation requirement
pursuant to s. 1013.64(2)(a)8. that is being satisfied by
revenues raised by the discretionary millage; or

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2959 2. For construction projects for which Special Facilities
2960 Construction Account funding is sought beginning in the 2026-
2961 2027 fiscal year, the value of 1 mill from the revenue generated
2962 pursuant to s. 1013.64(2)(a)8.b.

2963 (b) Divide the school district's adjusted discretionary
2964 millage revenue by the district's total capital outlay full-time
2965 equivalent membership and the total number of full-time
2966 equivalent students of each eligible charter school to determine
2967 a capital outlay allocation per full-time equivalent student.

2968 (c) Multiply the capital outlay allocation per full-time
2969 equivalent student by the total number of full-time equivalent
2970 students of each eligible charter school to determine the
2971 capital outlay allocation for each charter school.

2972 (d) If applicable, reduce the capital outlay allocation
2973 identified in paragraph (c) by the total amount of state funds
2974 allocated to each eligible charter school in subsection (2) to
2975 determine the maximum calculated capital outlay allocation. The
2976 amount of funds a school district must distribute to charter
2977 schools shall be as follows:

2978 1. For fiscal year 2023-2024, the amount is 20 percent of
2979 the amount calculated under this paragraph.

2980 2. For fiscal year 2024-2025, the amount is 40 percent of
2981 the amount calculated under this paragraph.

2982 3. For fiscal year 2025-2026, the amount is 60 percent of
2983 the amount calculated under this paragraph.

2984 4. For fiscal year 2026-2027, the amount is 80 percent of
2985 the amount calculated under this paragraph.

2986 5. For fiscal year 2027-2028, and each fiscal year
2987 thereafter, the amount is 100 percent of the amount calculated

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under this paragraph.

(e) School districts shall distribute capital outlay funds to eligible charter schools no later than February 1 of each year, as required by this subsection, based on the amount of funds received by the district school board. School districts shall distribute any remaining capital outlay funds, as required by this subsection, upon the receipt of such funds until the total amount calculated pursuant to this subsection is distributed.

By October 1 of each year, each school district shall certify to the department the amount of debt service that ~~and participation requirement that complies with the requirement of paragraph (a) and~~ can be reduced from the total discretionary millage revenue. Each school district shall also certify the amount of the participation requirement that complies with paragraph (a) or certify the value of 1 mill from revenue generated pursuant to s. 1013.64(2)(a)8.b. that can be reduced from the total discretionary millage revenue, as applicable. The Auditor General shall verify compliance with the requirements of paragraph (a) and s. 1011.71(2)(e) during scheduled operational audits of school districts.

Section 44. Paragraph (a) of subsection (2) of section 1013.64, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1013.64 Funds for comprehensive educational plant needs; construction cost maximums for school district capital projects.—Allocations from the Public Education Capital Outlay and Debt Service Trust Fund to the various boards for capital outlay projects shall be determined as follows:

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(2)(a) The department shall establish, as a part of the Public Education Capital Outlay and Debt Service Trust Fund, a separate account, in an amount determined by the Legislature, to be known as the "Special Facility Construction Account." The Special Facility Construction Account shall be used to provide necessary construction funds to school districts which have urgent construction needs but which lack sufficient resources at present, and cannot reasonably anticipate sufficient resources within the period of the next 3 years, for these purposes from currently authorized sources of capital outlay revenue. A school district requesting funding from the Special Facility Construction Account shall submit one specific construction project, not to exceed one complete educational plant, to the Special Facility Construction Committee. A district may not receive funding for more than one approved project in any 3-year period ~~or while any portion of the district's participation requirement is outstanding~~. The first year of the 3-year period shall be the first year a district receives an appropriation. The department shall encourage a construction program that reduces the average size of schools in the district. The request must meet the following criteria to be considered by the committee:

1. The project must be deemed a critical need and must be recommended for funding by the Special Facility Construction Committee. Before developing construction plans for the proposed facility, the district school board must request a preapplication review by the Special Facility Construction Committee or a project review subcommittee convened by the chair of the committee to include two representatives of the

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department and two staff members from school districts not eligible to participate in the program. A school district may request a preapplication review at any time; however, if the district school board seeks inclusion in the department's next annual capital outlay legislative budget request, the preapplication review request must be made before February 1. Within 90 days after receiving the preapplication review request, the committee or subcommittee must meet in the school district to review the project proposal and existing facilities. To determine whether the proposed project is a critical need, the committee or subcommittee shall consider, at a minimum, the capacity of all existing facilities within the district as determined by the Florida Inventory of School Houses; the district's pattern of student growth; the district's existing and projected capital outlay full-time equivalent student enrollment as determined by the demographic, revenue, and education estimating conferences established in s. 216.136; the district's existing satisfactory student stations; the use of all existing district property and facilities; grade level configurations; and any other information that may affect the need for the proposed project.

2. The construction project must be recommended in the most recent survey or survey amendment cooperatively prepared by the district and the department, and approved by the department under the rules of the State Board of Education. If a district employs a consultant in the preparation of a survey or survey amendment, the consultant may not be employed by or receive compensation from a third party that designs or constructs a project recommended by the survey.

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3. The construction project must appear on the district's approved project priority list under the rules of the State Board of Education.

4. The district must have selected and had approved a site for the construction project in compliance with s. 1013.36 and the rules of the State Board of Education.

5. The district shall have developed a district school board adopted list of facilities that do not exceed the norm for net square feet occupancy requirements under the State Requirements for Educational Facilities, using all possible programmatic combinations for multiple use of space to obtain maximum daily use of all spaces within the facility under consideration.

6. Upon construction, the total cost per student station, including change orders, must not exceed the cost per student station as provided in subsection (6) unless approved by the Special Facility Construction Committee. At the discretion of the committee, costs that exceed the cost per student station for special facilities may include legal and administrative fees, the cost of site improvements or related offsite improvements, the cost of complying with public shelter and hurricane hardening requirements, cost overruns created by a disaster as defined in s. 252.34(2), costs of security enhancements approved by the school safety specialist, and unforeseeable circumstances beyond the district's control.

7. There shall be an agreement signed by the district school board stating that it will advertise for bids within 30 days of receipt of its encumbrance authorization from the department.

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8.a.(I) For construction projects for which Special Facilities Construction Account funding is sought before the 2019-2020 fiscal year, the district shall, at the time of the request and for a continuing period necessary to meet the district's participation requirement, levy the maximum millage against its nonexempt assessed property value as allowed in s. 1011.71(2) or shall raise an equivalent amount of revenue from the school capital outlay surtax authorized under s. 212.055(6).

(II) Beginning with construction projects for which Special Facilities Construction Account funding is sought in the 2019-2020 fiscal year, the district shall, for a minimum of 3 years before submitting the request and for a continuing period necessary to meet its participation requirement, levy the maximum millage against the district's nonexempt assessed property value as authorized under s. 1011.71(2) or shall raise an equivalent amount of revenue from the school capital outlay surtax authorized under s. 212.055(6).

(III) Beginning with the 2026-2027 fiscal year, any district with an ~~a new or~~ active project or an outstanding participation requirement balance, funded under ~~the provisions of~~ this subsection, shall be required to budget no more than the value of 1 mill per year to the project until the district's participation requirement relating to the local discretionary capital improvement millage or the equivalent amount of revenue from the school capital outlay surtax is satisfied.

b. For construction projects for which Special Facilities Construction Account funding is sought beginning in the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the district shall, for a minimum of 3 years before submitting the request and for the initial year of the

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3133 appropriation and the 2 years following the initial
3134 appropriation, levy the maximum millage against the district's
3135 nonexempt assessed property value as authorized under s.
3136 1011.71(2) or shall raise an equivalent amount of revenue from
3137 the school capital outlay surtax authorized under s. 212.055(6).
3138 The district is not required to budget the funds toward the
3139 project, but must use the funds as authorized pursuant to s.
3140 1011.71 or s. 212.055(6), as applicable.

3141 9. If a contract has not been signed 90 days after the
3142 advertising of bids, the funding for the specific project must
3143 ~~shall~~ revert to the Special Facility New Construction Account to
3144 be reallocated to other projects on the list. However, an
3145 additional 90 days may be granted by the commissioner.

3146 10. The department shall certify the inability of the
3147 district to fund the survey-recommended project over a
3148 continuous 3-year period using projected capital outlay revenue
3149 derived from s. 9(d), Art. XII of the State Constitution, as
3150 amended, paragraph (3)(a) of this section, and s. 1011.71(2).

3151 11.a. For projects funded before the 2026-2027 fiscal year,
3152 the district shall have on file with the department an adopted
3153 resolution acknowledging its commitment to satisfy its
3154 participation requirement, which is equivalent to all
3155 unencumbered and future revenue acquired from s. 9(d), Art. XII
3156 of the State Constitution, as amended, paragraph (3)(a) of this
3157 section, and s. 1011.71(2), in the year of the initial
3158 appropriation and for the 2 years immediately following the
3159 initial appropriation.

3160 b. For projects funded during the 2026-2027 fiscal year,
3161 and thereafter, the district shall have on file with the

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department an adopted resolution acknowledging its commitment to
comply with the requirements of this paragraph.

12. Phase I plans must be approved by the district school
board as being in compliance with the building and life safety
codes before June 1 of the year the application is made.

Section 45. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of \$1
million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is
appropriated to the Florida Small Business Development Center
Network under s. 288.001, Florida Statutes, to expand services
in rural communities. The funds shall be allocated to the Office
of Rural Prosperity budget entity within the Department of
Commerce in the Special Categories-SBDCN Rural Services specific
appropriation category.

Section 46. (1) For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sums of
\$1,827,591 in recurring funds and \$652,327 in nonrecurring funds
are appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Department
of Commerce.

(2) The recurring general revenue funds shall be allocated
to the Office of Rural Prosperity budget entity in the following
specific appropriations categories: \$1,585,823 in Salaries and
Benefits, \$175,961 in Expenses, \$50,000 in Contracted Services,
\$10,000 in Operating Capital Outlay, and \$5,807 in Transfer to
the Department of Management Services/Statewide Human Resources
Contract.

(3) The nonrecurring general revenue funds shall be
allocated to the Office of Rural Prosperity budget entity in the
following specific appropriations categories: \$92,327 in
Expenses and \$560,000 in Acquisition of Motor Vehicles.

(4) The Department of Commerce is authorized to establish

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17.00 full-time equivalent positions with associated salary rate of 1,060,000 in the Office of Rural Prosperity for the purpose of implementing this act. The following specific positions, classifications, and pay plans are authorized: 1.00 Director of General Operations, Class Code 9327, Pay Grade 940; 15.00 Government Analyst II, Class Code 2225, Pay Grade 026; and 1.00 Administrative Assistant II, Class Code 0712, Pay Grade 018.

Section 47. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the recurring sum of \$7 million from the General Revenue Fund is appropriated to the Office of Rural Prosperity within the Department of Commerce to implement the Renaissance Grants Program created by s. 288.014, Florida Statutes. Funds may not be used by the state for administrative costs.

Section 48. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the recurring sum of \$500,000 from the Grants and Donations Trust Fund within the Department of Commerce is appropriated to the Office of Rural Prosperity within the Department of Commerce to implement the Public Infrastructure Smart Technology Grant Program created by s. 288.0175, Florida Statutes.

Section 49. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sums of \$4 million in nonrecurring funds and \$1 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund are appropriated to the Office of Rural Prosperity within the Department of Commerce to implement the Rural Community Development Revolving Loan Fund under s. 288.065, Florida Statutes, as amended by this act.

Section 50. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sums of \$40 million in nonrecurring funds and \$5 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund are appropriated to the Office of Rural Prosperity within the Department of Commerce to implement

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the Rural Infrastructure Fund under s. 288.0655, Florida Statutes, as amended by this act.

Section 51. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of \$250,000 in recurring funds from the Grants and Donations Trust Fund within the Department of Commerce is appropriated to the Office of Rural Prosperity within the Department of Commerce to implement s. 288.0657, Florida Statutes, as amended by this act.

Section 52. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of \$30 million in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is appropriated to the Florida Housing Finance Corporation to be used to preserve affordable multifamily rental housing in rural communities funded through United States Department of Agriculture loans. The funds provided in this appropriation must be used to issue competitive requests for applications for the rehabilitation or acquisition of such properties to ensure continued affordability. By October 1, 2027, the Florida Housing Finance Corporation shall submit a report to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives on projects funded pursuant to this section, which report must include the number of units preserved and the financing portfolio for each project.

Section 53. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of \$25 million in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is appropriated to the Department of Health for the purpose of implementing the Rural Access to Primary and Preventive Care Grant Program created under s. 381.403, Florida Statutes. Grant funds shall be awarded over a 5-year period. Notwithstanding s. 216.301, Florida Statutes, and pursuant to s. 216.351, Florida Statutes, the unexpended balance of funds appropriated pursuant

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to this section which is not disbursed by June 30 of the fiscal year in which funds are appropriated may be carried forward through the 2034-2035 fiscal year.

Section 54. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of \$5 million in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is appropriated to the Department of Health for the purpose of implementing the Stroke, Cardiac, and Obstetric Response and Education Grant Program under s. 381.9856, Florida Statutes. Notwithstanding s. 216.301, Florida Statutes, and pursuant to s. 216.351, Florida Statutes, the unexpended balance of funds appropriated pursuant to this section which is not disbursed by June 30 of the fiscal year in which funds are appropriated may be carried forward through the 2030-2031 fiscal year.

Section 55. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of \$25 million in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is appropriated to the Department of Health for the purpose of implementing the rural hospital capital improvement grant program under s. 395.6061, Florida Statutes.

Section 56. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sums of \$186,729 in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund and \$250,884 in recurring funds from the Medical Care Trust Fund are appropriated to the Agency for Health Care Administration to establish a Diagnosis-Related Grouping (DRG) reimbursement methodology for critical access hospitals, as defined in s. 408.07, Florida Statutes, for the purpose of providing inpatient reimbursement to such a hospital in amounts comparable to the reimbursement the hospital would receive for inpatient services from the federal Medicare program. The 2026-2027 fiscal year General Appropriations Act shall establish the DRG reimbursement

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methodology for critical access hospital inpatient services as directed in s. 409.905(5)(c), Florida Statutes. Health plans that participate in the Statewide Medicaid Managed Care program shall pass through the fee increase to providers in this appropriation.

Section 57. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sums of \$7,487,068 in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund and \$10,059,377 in recurring funds from the Medical Care Trust Fund are appropriated to the Agency for Health Care Administration to establish an Enhanced Ambulatory Patient Grouping (EAPG) reimbursement methodology for critical access hospitals, as defined in s. 408.07, Florida Statutes, for the purpose of providing outpatient reimbursement to such a hospital in amounts comparable to the reimbursement the hospital would receive for outpatient services from the federal Medicare program. The 2026-2027 fiscal year General Appropriations Act shall establish the EAPG reimbursement methodology for critical access hospital outpatient services as directed in s. 409.905(6)(b), Florida Statutes. Health plans that participate in the Statewide Medicaid Managed Care program shall pass through the fee increase to providers in this appropriation.

Section 58. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of \$3.6 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is appropriated to the Department of Education to implement s. 1001.451, Florida Statutes, as amended by this act.

Section 59. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of \$25 million in recurring funds is appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Department of Education to be distributed to regional consortium service organizations under s. 1001.451,

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Florida Statutes, in order to provide funds pursuant to s. 1001.4511, Florida Statutes. These funds shall be allocated as follows: \$5,555,149 to the Heartland Educational Consortium; \$11,912,923 to the North East Florida Educational Consortium; and \$7,531,928 to the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium. The funds must be distributed to each regional consortium service organization no later than 30 days following the release of the funds to the department.

Section 60. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of \$7 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is appropriated to the Department of Education to implement the Rural Incentive for Professional Educators (RIPE) Program, s. 1009.635, Florida Statutes, as created by this act.

Section 61. Subsection (3) of section 163.3187, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

163.3187 Process for adoption of small scale comprehensive plan amendment.—

(3) If the small scale development amendment involves a site within a rural area of opportunity as defined under s. 288.0656 ~~s. 288.0656(2)(d)~~ for the duration of such designation, the acreage limit listed in subsection (1) must ~~shall~~ be increased by 100 percent. The local government approving the small scale plan amendment shall certify to the state land planning agency that the plan amendment furthers the economic objectives set forth in the executive order issued under s. 288.0656(7), and the property subject to the plan amendment shall undergo public review to ensure that all concurrency requirements and federal, state, and local environmental permit requirements are met.

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Section 62. Section 212.205, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

212.205 Sales tax distribution reporting.—By March 15 of each year, each person who received a distribution pursuant to s. 212.20(6)(d) 7.b. and c. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d) 6.b. and c.~~ in the preceding calendar year shall report to the Office of Economic and Demographic Research the following information:

(1) An itemized accounting of all expenditures of the funds distributed in the preceding calendar year, including amounts spent on debt service.

(2) A statement indicating what portion of the distributed funds have been pledged for debt service.

(3) The original principal amount and current debt service schedule of any bonds or other borrowing for which the distributed funds have been pledged for debt service.

Section 63. Section 257.191, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

257.191 Construction grants.—The Division of Library and Information Services may accept and administer library construction moneys appropriated to it and shall allocate such appropriation to municipal, county, and regional libraries in the form of library construction grants on a matching basis. The local matching portion shall be no less than the grant amount, on a dollar-for-dollar basis, up to the maximum grant amount, unless the matching requirement is waived pursuant to s. 288.019 ~~by s. 288.06561~~. Initiation of a library construction project 12 months or less prior to the grant award under this section does ~~shall~~ not affect the eligibility of an applicant to receive a library construction grant. The division shall adopt rules for

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the administration of library construction grants. For the purposes of this section, s. 257.21 does not apply.

Section 64. Subsection (2) of section 257.193, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

257.193 Community Libraries in Caring Program.—

(2) The purpose of the Community Libraries in Caring Program is to assist libraries in rural communities, as defined in s. 288.0656(2) and subject to the provisions of s. 288.019 ~~s. 288.0656~~, to strengthen their collections and services, improve literacy in their communities, and improve the economic viability of their communities.

Section 65. Subsection (17) of section 265.283, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

265.283 Definitions.—The following definitions shall apply to ss. 265.281-265.703:

(17) "Underserved arts community assistance program grants" means grants used by qualified organizations under the Rural Economic Development Initiative, pursuant to s. 288.0656 and subject to s. 288.019 ~~ss. 288.0656 and 288.0656~~, for the purpose of economic and organizational development for underserved cultural organizations.

Section 66. Paragraphs (a) and (d) of subsection (3) of section 288.11621, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

288.11621 Spring training baseball franchises.—

(3) USE OF FUNDS.—

(a) A certified applicant may use funds provided under s. 212.20(6)(d)7.b. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.b.~~ only to:

1. Serve the public purpose of acquiring, constructing, reconstructing, or renovating a facility for a spring training

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franchise.

2. Pay or pledge for the payment of debt service on, or to fund debt service reserve funds, arbitrage rebate obligations, or other amounts payable with respect thereto, bonds issued for the acquisition, construction, reconstruction, or renovation of such facility, or for the reimbursement of such costs or the refinancing of bonds issued for such purposes.

3. Assist in the relocation of a spring training franchise from one unit of local government to another only if the governing board of the current host local government by a majority vote agrees to relocation.

(d)1. All certified applicants must place unexpended state funds received pursuant to s. 212.20(6)(d)7.b. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.b.~~ in a trust fund or separate account for use only as authorized in this section.

2. A certified applicant may request that the Department of Revenue suspend further distributions of state funds made available under s. 212.20(6)(d)7.b. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.b.~~ for 12 months after expiration of an existing agreement with a spring training franchise to provide the certified applicant with an opportunity to enter into a new agreement with a spring training franchise, at which time the distributions shall resume.

3. The expenditure of state funds distributed to an applicant certified before July 1, 2010, must begin within 48 months after the initial receipt of the state funds. In addition, the construction of, or capital improvements to, a spring training facility must be completed within 24 months after the project's commencement.

Section 67. Paragraph (c) of subsection (2) and paragraphs

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(a), (c), and (d) of subsection (3) of section 288.11631, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

288.11631 Retention of Major League Baseball spring training baseball franchises.—

(2) CERTIFICATION PROCESS.—

(c) Each applicant certified on or after July 1, 2013, shall enter into an agreement with the department which:

1. Specifies the amount of the state incentive funding to be distributed. The amount of state incentive funding per certified applicant may not exceed \$20 million. However, if a certified applicant's facility is used by more than one spring training franchise, the maximum amount may not exceed \$50 million, and the Department of Revenue shall make distributions to the applicant pursuant to s. 212.20(6)(d)7.c. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.e.~~

2. States the criteria that the certified applicant must meet in order to remain certified. These criteria must include a provision stating that the spring training franchise must reimburse the state for any funds received if the franchise does not comply with the terms of the contract. If bonds were issued to construct or renovate a facility for a spring training franchise, the required reimbursement must be equal to the total amount of state distributions expected to be paid from the date the franchise violates the agreement with the applicant through the final maturity of the bonds.

3. States that the certified applicant is subject to decertification if the certified applicant fails to comply with this section or the agreement.

4. States that the department may recover state incentive

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funds if the certified applicant is decertified.

5. Specifies the information that the certified applicant must report to the department.

6. Includes any provision deemed prudent by the department.

(3) USE OF FUNDS.—

(a) A certified applicant may use funds provided under s. 212.20(6)(d)7.c. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.e.~~ only to:

1. Serve the public purpose of constructing or renovating a facility for a spring training franchise.

2. Pay or pledge for the payment of debt service on, or to fund debt service reserve funds, arbitrage rebate obligations, or other amounts payable with respect thereto, bonds issued for the construction or renovation of such facility, or for the reimbursement of such costs or the refinancing of bonds issued for such purposes.

(c) The Department of Revenue may not distribute funds under s. 212.20(6)(d)7.c. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.e.~~ until July 1, 2016. Further, the Department of Revenue may not distribute funds to an applicant certified on or after July 1, 2013, until it receives notice from the department that:

1. The certified applicant has encumbered funds under either subparagraph (a)1. or subparagraph (a)2.; and

2. If applicable, any existing agreement with a spring training franchise for the use of a facility has expired.

(d)1. All certified applicants shall place unexpended state funds received pursuant to s. 212.20(6)(d)7.c. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.e.~~ in a trust fund or separate account for use only as authorized in this section.

2. A certified applicant may request that the department

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notify the Department of Revenue to suspend further distributions of state funds made available under s. 212.20(6)(d)7.c. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.e.~~ for 12 months after expiration of an existing agreement with a spring training franchise to provide the certified applicant with an opportunity to enter into a new agreement with a spring training franchise, at which time the distributions shall resume.

3. The expenditure of state funds distributed to an applicant certified after July 1, 2013, must begin within 48 months after the initial receipt of the state funds. In addition, the construction or renovation of a spring training facility must be completed within 24 months after the project's commencement.

Section 68. Subsection (1) of section 443.191, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

443.191 Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund; establishment and control.—

(1) There is established, as a separate trust fund apart from all other public funds of this state, an Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund, which shall be administered by the Department of Commerce exclusively for the purposes of this chapter. The fund must consist of:

(a) All contributions and reimbursements collected under this chapter;

(b) Interest earned on any moneys in the fund;

(c) Any property or securities acquired through the use of moneys belonging to the fund;

(d) All earnings of these properties or securities;

(e) All money credited to this state's account in the

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federal Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund under 42 U.S.C. s.
1103;

(f) All money collected for penalties imposed pursuant to
s. 443.151(6)(a);

(g) Advances on the amount in the federal Unemployment
Compensation Trust Fund credited to the state under 42 U.S.C. s.
1321, as requested by the Governor or the Governor's designee;
and

(h) All money deposited in this account as a distribution
pursuant to s. 212.20(6)(d)7.e. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.e.~~

Except as otherwise provided in s. 443.1313(4), all moneys in
the fund must be mingled and undivided.

Section 69. Section 571.26, Florida Statutes, is amended to
read:

571.26 Florida Agricultural Promotional Campaign Trust
Fund.—There is hereby created the Florida Agricultural
Promotional Campaign Trust Fund within the Department of
Agriculture and Consumer Services to receive all moneys related
to the Florida Agricultural Promotional Campaign. Moneys
deposited in the trust fund shall be appropriated for the sole
purpose of implementing the Florida Agricultural Promotional
Campaign, except for money deposited in the trust fund pursuant
to s. 212.20(6)(d)7.e. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.e.~~, which shall be held
separately and used solely for the purposes identified in s.
571.265.

Section 70. Subsection (2) of section 571.265, Florida
Statutes, is amended to read:

571.265 Promotion of Florida thoroughbred breeding and of

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thoroughbred racing at Florida thoroughbred tracks; distribution of funds.—

(2) Funds deposited into the Florida Agricultural Promotional Campaign Trust Fund pursuant to s. 212.20(6)(d)7.e. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.e.~~ shall be used by the department to encourage the agricultural activity of breeding thoroughbred racehorses in this state and to enhance thoroughbred racing conducted at thoroughbred tracks in this state as provided in this section. If the funds made available under this section are not fully used in any one fiscal year, any unused amounts shall be carried forward in the trust fund into future fiscal years and made available for distribution as provided in this section.

Section 71. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 20.60, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, subsection (8) of section 288.9935, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

288.9935 Microfinance Guarantee Program.—

(8) The department must, in the department's report required under s. 20.60(10), include an annual report on the program. The report must, at a minimum, provide:

(a) A comprehensive description of the program, including an evaluation of its application and guarantee activities, recommendations for change, and identification of any other state programs that overlap with the program;

(b) An assessment of the current availability of and access to credit for entrepreneurs and small businesses in this state;

(c) A summary of the financial and employment results of the entrepreneurs and small businesses receiving loan guarantees, including the number of full-time equivalent jobs

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created as a result of the guaranteed loans and the amount of wages paid to employees in the newly created jobs;

(d) Industry data about the borrowers, including the six-digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code;

(e) The name and location of lenders that receive loan guarantees;

(f) The number of loan guarantee applications received;

(g) The number, duration, location, and amount of guarantees made;

(h) The number and amount of guaranteed loans outstanding, if any;

(i) The number and amount of guaranteed loans with payments overdue, if any;

(j) The number and amount of guaranteed loans in default, if any;

(k) The repayment history of the guaranteed loans made; and

(l) An evaluation of the program's ability to meet the financial performance measures and objectives specified in subsection (3).

Section 72. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, paragraph (c) of subsection (5) of section 125.0104, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

125.0104 Tourist development tax; procedure for levying; authorized uses; referendum; enforcement.—

(5) AUTHORIZED USES OF REVENUE.—

(c) A county located adjacent to the Gulf of America or the Atlantic Ocean, except a county that receives revenue from taxes

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levied pursuant to s. 125.0108, which meets the following criteria may use up to 10 percent of the tax revenue received pursuant to this section to reimburse expenses incurred in providing public safety services, including emergency medical services as defined in s. 401.107(3), and law enforcement services, which are needed to address impacts related to increased tourism and visitors to an area. However, if taxes collected pursuant to this section are used to reimburse emergency medical services or public safety services for tourism or special events, the governing board of a county or municipality may not use such taxes to supplant the normal operating expenses of an emergency medical services department, a fire department, a sheriff's office, or a police department. To receive reimbursement, the county must:

1.a. Generate a minimum of \$10 million in annual proceeds from any tax, or any combination of taxes, authorized to be levied pursuant to this section;

b. Have at least three municipalities; and

c. Have an estimated population of less than 275,000, according to the most recent population estimate prepared pursuant to s. 186.901, excluding the inmate population; or

2. Be a fiscally constrained county as described in s. 218.67(1).

The board of county commissioners must by majority vote approve reimbursement made pursuant to this paragraph upon receipt of a recommendation from the tourist development council.

Section 73. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a

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reference thereto, subsection (3) of section 193.624, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

193.624 Assessment of renewable energy source devices.—

(3) This section applies to the installation of a renewable energy source device installed on or after January 1, 2013, to new and existing residential real property. This section applies to a renewable energy source device installed on or after January 1, 2018, to all other real property, except when installed as part of a project planned for a location in a fiscally constrained county, as defined in s. 218.67(1), and for which an application for a comprehensive plan amendment or planned unit development zoning has been filed with the county on or before December 31, 2017.

Section 74. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, subsection (2) of section 196.182, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

196.182 Exemption of renewable energy source devices.—

(2) The exemption provided in this section does not apply to a renewable energy source device that is installed as part of a project planned for a location in a fiscally constrained county, as defined in s. 218.67(1), and for which an application for a comprehensive plan amendment or planned unit development zoning has been filed with the county on or before December 31, 2017.

Section 75. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, subsection (1) of section 218.12, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

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218.12 Appropriations to offset reductions in ad valorem tax revenue in fiscally constrained counties.—

(1) Beginning in fiscal year 2008-2009, the Legislature shall appropriate moneys to offset the reductions in ad valorem tax revenue experienced by fiscally constrained counties, as defined in s. 218.67(1), which occur as a direct result of the implementation of revisions of Art. VII of the State Constitution approved in the special election held on January 29, 2008. The moneys appropriated for this purpose shall be distributed in January of each fiscal year among the fiscally constrained counties based on each county's proportion of the total reduction in ad valorem tax revenue resulting from the implementation of the revision.

Section 76. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, subsection (1) of section 218.125, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

218.125 Offset for tax loss associated with certain constitutional amendments affecting fiscally constrained counties.—

(1) Beginning in the 2010-2011 fiscal year, the Legislature shall appropriate moneys to offset the reductions in ad valorem tax revenue experienced by fiscally constrained counties, as defined in s. 218.67(1), which occur as a direct result of the implementation of revisions of ss. 3(f) and 4(b), Art. VII of the State Constitution which were approved in the general election held in November 2008. The moneys appropriated for this purpose shall be distributed in January of each fiscal year among the fiscally constrained counties based on each county's

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proportion of the total reduction in ad valorem tax revenue resulting from the implementation of the revisions.

Section 77. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, subsection (1) of section 218.135, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

218.135 Offset for tax loss associated with reductions in value of certain citrus fruit packing and processing equipment.—

(1) For the 2018-2019 fiscal year, the Legislature shall appropriate moneys to offset the reductions in ad valorem tax revenue experienced by fiscally constrained counties, as defined in s. 218.67(1), which occur as a direct result of the implementation of s. 193.4516. The moneys appropriated for this purpose shall be distributed in January 2019 among the fiscally constrained counties based on each county's proportion of the total reduction in ad valorem tax revenue resulting from the implementation of s. 193.4516.

Section 78. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, subsection (1) of section 218.136, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

218.136 Offset for ad valorem revenue loss affecting fiscally constrained counties.—

(1) Beginning in fiscal year 2025-2026, the Legislature shall appropriate moneys to offset the reductions in ad valorem tax revenue experienced by fiscally constrained counties, as defined in s. 218.67(1), which occur as a direct result of the implementation of revisions of s. 6(a), Art. VII of the State Constitution approved in the November 2024 general election. The

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moneys appropriated for this purpose shall be distributed in January of each fiscal year among the fiscally constrained counties based on each county's proportion of the total reduction in ad valorem tax revenue resulting from the implementation of the revision of s. 6(a), Art. VII of the State Constitution.

Section 79. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, paragraph (cc) of subsection (2) of section 252.35, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

252.35 Emergency management powers; Division of Emergency Management.—

(2) The division is responsible for carrying out the provisions of ss. 252.31-252.90. In performing its duties, the division shall:

(cc) Administer a revolving loan program for local government hazard mitigation projects.

Section 80. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, subsection (4) of section 288.102, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

288.102 Supply Chain Innovation Grant Program.—

(4) A minimum of a one-to-one match of nonstate resources, including local, federal, or private funds, to the state contribution is required. An award may not be made for a project that is receiving or using state funding from another state source or statutory program, including tax credits. The one-to-one match requirement is waived for a public entity located in a fiscally constrained county as defined in s. 218.67(1).

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Section 81. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, paragraph (h) of subsection (16) of section 403.064, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

403.064 Reuse of reclaimed water.—

(16) By November 1, 2021, domestic wastewater utilities that dispose of effluent, reclaimed water, or reuse water by surface water discharge shall submit to the department for review and approval a plan for eliminating nonbeneficial surface water discharge by January 1, 2032, subject to the requirements of this section. The plan must include the average gallons per day of effluent, reclaimed water, or reuse water that will no longer be discharged into surface waters and the date of such elimination, the average gallons per day of surface water discharge which will continue in accordance with the alternatives provided for in subparagraphs (a)2. and 3., and the level of treatment that the effluent, reclaimed water, or reuse water will receive before being discharged into a surface water by each alternative.

(h) This subsection does not apply to any of the following:

1. A domestic wastewater treatment facility that is located in a fiscally constrained county as described in s. 218.67(1).

2. A domestic wastewater treatment facility that is located in a municipality that is entirely within a rural area of opportunity as designated pursuant to s. 288.0656.

3. A domestic wastewater treatment facility that is located in a municipality that has less than \$10 million in total revenue, as determined by the municipality's most recent annual financial report submitted to the Department of Financial

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Services in accordance with s. 218.32.

4. A domestic wastewater treatment facility that is operated by an operator of a mobile home park as defined in s. 723.003 and has a permitted capacity of less than 300,000 gallons per day.

Section 82. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in references thereto, subsections (2) and (3) of section 589.08, Florida Statutes, are reenacted to read:

589.08 Land acquisition restrictions.—

(2) The Florida Forest Service may receive, hold the custody of, and exercise the control of any lands, and set aside into a separate, distinct and inviolable fund, any proceeds derived from the sales of the products of such lands, the use thereof in any manner, or the sale of such lands save the 25 percent of the proceeds to be paid into the State School Fund as provided by law. The Florida Forest Service may use and apply such funds for the acquisition, use, custody, management, development, or improvement of any lands vested in or subject to the control of the Florida Forest Service. After full payment has been made for the purchase of a state forest to the Federal Government or other grantor, 15 percent of the gross receipts from a state forest shall be paid to the fiscally constrained county or counties, as described in s. 218.67(1), in which it is located in proportion to the acreage located in each county for use by the county or counties for school purposes.

(3) The Florida Forest Service shall pay 15 percent of the gross receipts from the Goethe State Forest to each fiscally constrained county, as described in s. 218.67(1), in which a

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portion of the respective forest is located in proportion to the forest acreage located in such county. The funds must be equally divided between the board of county commissioners and the school board of each fiscally constrained county.

Section 83. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, paragraph (f) of subsection (1) of section 1011.62, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

1011.62 Funds for operation of schools.—If the annual allocation from the Florida Education Finance Program to each district for operation of schools is not determined in the annual appropriations act or the substantive bill implementing the annual appropriations act, it shall be determined as follows:

(1) COMPUTATION OF THE BASE FLORIDA EDUCATION FINANCE PROGRAM.—The following procedure shall be followed in determining the base Florida Education Finance Program funds for each district:

(f) *Small district factor*.—An additional value per full-time equivalent student membership is provided to each school district with a full-time equivalent student membership of fewer than 20,000 full-time equivalent students which is in a fiscally constrained county as described in s. 218.67(1). The amount of the additional value shall be specified in the General Appropriations Act.

Section 84. For the purpose of incorporating the amendments made by this act to sections 218.67 and 339.2818, Florida Statutes, in references thereto, paragraph (c) of subsection (6) of section 403.0741, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

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403.0741 Grease waste removal and disposal.—

(6) REGULATION BY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.—

(c) Fiscally constrained counties as described in s. 218.67(1) and small counties as defined in s. 339.2818(2) may opt out of the requirements of this section.

Section 85. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 288.0656, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, paragraph (e) of subsection (7) of section 163.3177, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

163.3177 Required and optional elements of comprehensive plan; studies and surveys.—

(7)

(e) This subsection does not confer the status of rural area of opportunity, or any of the rights or benefits derived from such status, on any land area not otherwise designated as such pursuant to s. 288.0656(7).

Section 86. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 288.9961, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, paragraph (a) of subsection (7) of section 288.9962, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

288.9962 Broadband Opportunity Program.—

(7)(a) In evaluating grant applications and awarding grants, the office must give priority to applications that:

1. Offer broadband Internet service to important community institutions, including, but not limited to, libraries, educational institutions, public safety facilities, and health care facilities;

2. Facilitate the use of telemedicine and electronic health records;

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3. Serve economically distressed areas of this state, as measured by indices of unemployment, poverty, or population loss that are significantly greater than the statewide average;

4. Provide for scalability to transmission speeds of at least 100 megabits per second download and 10 megabits per second upload;

5. Include a component to actively promote the adoption of the newly available broadband Internet service in the community;

6. Provide evidence of strong support for the project from citizens, government, businesses, and institutions in the community;

7. Provide access to broadband Internet service to the greatest number of unserved households and businesses;

8. Leverage greater amounts of funding for a project from private sources; or

9. Demonstrate consistency with the strategic plan adopted under s. 288.9961.

Section 87. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 319.32, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, subsection (1) of section 215.211, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

215.211 Service charge; elimination or reduction for specified proceeds.—

(1) Notwithstanding the provisions of s. 215.20(1) and former s. 215.20(3), the service charge provided in s. 215.20(1) and former s. 215.20(3), which is deducted from the proceeds of the taxes distributed under ss. 206.606(1), 207.026, 212.0501(6), and 319.32(5), shall be eliminated beginning July 1, 2000.

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Section 88. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 339.68, Florida Statutes, in references thereto, subsections (5) and (6) of section 339.66, Florida Statutes, are reenacted to read:

339.66 Upgrade of arterial highways with controlled access facilities.—

(5) Any existing applicable requirements relating to department projects shall apply to projects undertaken by the department pursuant to this section. The department shall take into consideration the guidance and recommendations of any previous studies or reports relevant to the projects authorized by this section and ss. 339.67 and 339.68, including, but not limited to, the task force reports prepared pursuant to chapter 2019-43, Laws of Florida.

(6) Any existing applicable requirements relating to turnpike projects apply to projects undertaken by the Turnpike Enterprise pursuant to this section. The Turnpike Enterprise shall take into consideration the guidance and recommendations of any previous studies or reports relevant to the projects authorized by this section and ss. 339.67 and 339.68, including, but not limited to, the task force reports prepared pursuant to chapter 2019-43, Laws of Florida, and with respect to any extension of the Florida Turnpike from its northerly terminus in Wildwood.

Section 89. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 420.9073, Florida Statutes, in references thereto, subsections (4) and (6) of section 420.9072, Florida Statutes, are reenacted to read:

420.9072 State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program.—The

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State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program is created for the purpose of providing funds to counties and eligible municipalities as an incentive for the creation of local housing partnerships, to expand production of and preserve affordable housing, to further the housing element of the local government comprehensive plan specific to affordable housing, and to increase housing-related employment.

(4) Moneys in the Local Government Housing Trust Fund shall be distributed by the corporation to each approved county and eligible municipality within the county as provided in s. 420.9073. Distributions shall be allocated to the participating county and to each eligible municipality within the county according to an interlocal agreement between the county governing authority and the governing body of the eligible municipality or, if there is no interlocal agreement, according to population. The portion for each eligible municipality is computed by multiplying the total moneys earmarked for a county by a fraction, the numerator of which is the population of the eligible municipality and the denominator of which is the total population of the county. The remaining revenues shall be distributed to the governing body of the county.

(6) The moneys that otherwise would be distributed pursuant to s. 420.9073 to a local government that does not meet the program's requirements for receipts of such distributions shall remain in the Local Government Housing Trust Fund to be administered by the corporation.

Section 90. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 420.9073, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, paragraph (b) of subsection (7) of section

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420.9076, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

420.9076 Adoption of affordable housing incentive strategies; committees.—

(7) The governing board of the county or the eligible municipality shall notify the corporation by certified mail of its adoption of an amendment of its local housing assistance plan to incorporate local housing incentive strategies. The notice must include a copy of the approved amended plan.

(b) If a county fails to timely adopt an amended local housing assistance plan to incorporate local housing incentive strategies but an eligible municipality receiving a local housing distribution pursuant to an interlocal agreement within the county does timely adopt an amended local housing assistance plan to incorporate local housing incentive strategies, the corporation, after issuance of a notice of termination, shall thereafter distribute directly to the participating eligible municipality its share calculated in the manner provided in s. 420.9073.

Section 91. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 420.9073, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, subsection (2) of section 420.9079, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

420.9079 Local Government Housing Trust Fund.—

(2) The corporation shall administer the fund exclusively for the purpose of implementing the programs described in ss. 420.907-420.9076 and this section. With the exception of monitoring the activities of counties and eligible municipalities to determine local compliance with program requirements, the corporation shall not receive appropriations

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3974 from the fund for administrative or personnel costs. For the
3975 purpose of implementing the compliance monitoring provisions of
3976 s. 420.9075(9), the corporation may request a maximum of one-
3977 quarter of 1 percent of the annual appropriation per state
3978 fiscal year. When such funding is appropriated, the corporation
3979 shall deduct the amount appropriated prior to calculating the
3980 local housing distribution pursuant to ss. 420.9072 and
3981 420.9073.

3982 Section 92. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.