

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to special district funding; amending
3 s. 215.971, F.S.; revising agency agreements that
4 provide state financial assistance to recipients or
5 subrecipients to include certain special districts as
6 an entity to which such agency may provide for the
7 payment of invoices under specified circumstances;
8 providing construction; amending s. 288.0656, F.S.;
9 revising the definition of "rural community" to
10 include certain special districts; providing an
11 effective date.

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

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15 **Section 1. Paragraph (h) of subsection (1) of section**
16 **215.971, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:**

17 215.971 Agreements funded with federal or state
18 assistance.—

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

25 (h) If the agency agreement provides federal or state

26 financial assistance to a county or municipality that is a rural
27 community or rural area of opportunity as those terms are
28 defined in s. 288.0656(2) or a special district whose geographic
29 area, in whole or in part, is located in such county or
30 municipality, a provision allowing the agency to provide for the
31 payment of invoices to the county, municipality, ~~or~~ rural area
32 of opportunity as that term is defined in s. 288.0656(2), or
33 special district, for verified and eligible performance that has
34 been completed in accordance with the terms and conditions set
35 forth in the agreement. This provision is included to alleviate
36 the financial hardships that such ~~certain~~ rural counties, ~~and~~
37 municipalities, or special districts encounter when
38 administering agreements, and must be exercised by the agency if
39 ~~when~~ a county, ~~or~~ municipality, or special district whose
40 geographic area, in whole or in part, is located in such county
41 or municipality demonstrates financial hardship, to the extent
42 that federal or state law, rule, or other regulation allows such
43 payments. This paragraph may not be construed to alter or limit
44 any other provisions of federal or state law, rule, or other
45 regulation.

46 **Section 2. Paragraph (e) of subsection (2) of section**
47 **288.0656, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:**

48 288.0656 Rural Economic Development Initiative.—

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

50 (e) "Rural community" means:

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

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

54 3. A municipality or special district within a county
55 described in subparagraph 1. or subparagraph 2.

56 4. An unincorporated federal enterprise community or an
57 incorporated rural city with a population of 25,000 or fewer and
58 an employment base focused on traditional agricultural or
59 resource-based industries, located in a county not defined as
60 rural, which has at least three or more of the economic distress
61 factors identified in paragraph (c) and verified by the
62 department.

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

67 **Section 3.** This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.