

ENROLLED

CS/HB 273, Engrossed 1

2026 Legislature

1  
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 specified special districts  
6 as an entity to which such agency may provide for the  
7 payment of invoices under specified circumstances;  
8 providing construction; requiring state agencies to  
9 expedite payment requests from certain counties,  
10 municipalities, and special districts for a specified  
11 purpose; amending s. 288.0656, F.S.; revising the  
12 definition of the term "rural community" to include  
13 specified special districts; providing an effective  
14 date.

15  
16 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

17  
18 Section 1. Paragraph (h) of subsection (1) of section  
19 215.971, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

20 215.971 Agreements funded with federal or state  
21 assistance.—

22 (1) An agency agreement that provides state financial  
23 assistance to a recipient or subrecipient, as those terms are  
24 defined in s. 215.97, or that provides federal financial  
25 assistance to a subrecipient, as defined by applicable United

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26 States Office of Management and Budget circulars, must include  
 27 all of the following:

28 (h) If the agency agreement provides federal or state  
 29 financial assistance to a county or municipality that is a rural  
 30 community or rural area of opportunity as those terms are  
 31 defined in s. 288.0656(2) or a special district located entirely  
 32 within such county or municipality or an independent special  
 33 district that provides water and wastewater services within a  
 34 rural area of opportunity as defined in s. 288.0656(2), a  
 35 provision allowing the agency to provide for the payment of  
 36 invoices to such ~~the~~ county, municipality, or special district  
 37 ~~rural area of opportunity as that term is defined in s.~~  
 38 ~~288.0656(2),~~ for verified and eligible performance that has been  
 39 completed in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth  
 40 in the agreement. The provision is not intended to require  
 41 reimbursement to such county, municipality, or special district  
 42 for invoices paid, but to allow the agency to provide for the  
 43 payment of invoices due. The agency shall expedite payment  
 44 requests in order to facilitate the timely payment of invoices  
 45 received by such county, municipality, or special district. This  
 46 provision is included to alleviate the financial hardships that  
 47 such ~~certain rural~~ counties, and municipalities, or special  
 48 districts encounter when administering agreements, and must be  
 49 exercised by the agency if ~~when~~ a county, ~~or~~ municipality, or  
 50 special district located entirely within such county or

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51 municipality or an independent special district that provides  
 52 water and wastewater services within a rural area of  
 53 opportunity, as defined in s. 288.0656(2), demonstrates  
 54 financial hardship, to the extent that federal or state law,  
 55 rule, or other regulation allows such payments. This paragraph  
 56 may not be construed to alter or limit any other provisions of  
 57 federal or state law, rule, or other regulation.

58 Section 2. Paragraph (e) of subsection (2) of section  
 59 288.0656, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

60 288.0656 Rural Economic Development Initiative.—

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

62 (e) "Rural community" means:

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

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

66 3. A municipality or special district within a county  
 67 described in subparagraph 1. or subparagraph 2.

68 4. An unincorporated federal enterprise community or an  
 69 incorporated rural city with a population of 25,000 or fewer and  
 70 an employment base focused on traditional agricultural or  
 71 resource-based industries, located in a county not defined as  
 72 rural, which has at least three or more of the economic distress  
 73 factors identified in paragraph (c) and verified by the  
 74 department.

75 5. An independent special district that provides water and

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76 | wastewater services within a rural area of opportunity.

77 |

78 | For purposes of this paragraph, population shall be determined  
79 | in accordance with the most recent official estimate pursuant to  
80 | s. 186.901.

81 | Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.