



2026 State Legislative Program



**Charlotte County
Board of County Commissioners**



Charlotte County

2026 State Legislative Agenda

Guiding Statements

State and Local Governments are partners in the promotion and protection of the health and welfare of the community. To preserve this partnership Charlotte County will:

- Support state policies which benefit the economic development, environmental and social health of Charlotte County and its citizens.
- Oppose legislative changes or fiscal decisions which impact County revenues such as unfunded mandates, revenue limitations, trust fund diversions or cost shifts.
- Support local flexibility to address problems by honoring home rule and avoiding unnecessary preemptions of local authority.

CHARLOTTE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



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Charlotte County works in partnership with Florida's 67 counties via the Florida Association of Counties (FAC). Policy statements adopted by the FAC membership for the 2026 Florida Legislative Session will be incorporated throughout Charlotte County's State Legislative Agenda.



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Policy Statements

Economic Development

- **Support** a state-of-the-art welding facility, at the new Southwest Florida Advanced Manufacturing Training Center, to equip students with skills necessary for high demand careers.
- **Support** funding to establish a water management training program at Lemon Bay High School to prepare students for careers in local utilities and water resource management.
- **Support** continued funding for the Sports Retention grant program under the Department of Commerce.
- **Support** state funding that allows for creative approaches for local government partnerships with K-12, technical and post-secondary educational institutions in the creation of job training programs and innovation clusters that increases economic development opportunities.
- **Support** continued funding of the Florida Job Growth Grant Fund that provides critical funding for necessary infrastructure and workforce development projects that support economic development in Florida.
- **Support** legislation and appropriation that enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of the state and local government partnership in economic development through the greater use of targeted strategies and strategic investments to induce and retain sustainable economic activity resulting in a consistent positive return on investment for both state and local governments.
- **Support** legislation that would enhance the current incentives program to support and incentivize local governments to create and maintain a more sustainable and competitive physical and financial environment for attracting film, television, digital and new media related entertainment production in the State of Florida.
- **Support** efforts to maintain or increase funding for local government affordable housing programs.
- **Support** legislation amending the Live Local Act requiring qualifying projects to incorporate a mix of housing options, with a primary emphasis on affordability for individuals earning between 50% and 80% of the area median income (AMI).



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Budget, Taxation & General Government

- **Support** direct allocation of State received Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Relief (CDBG-DR) funds to counties designated as most impacted and distressed following a natural disaster proportionate to needs assessment.
- **Support** legislation and measures to clarify language in the 2019 CS/CS/CS SB 426. The bill requires greater administrative guidance on its scope and funding mechanisms to best assist firefighters and local governments in accomplishing its intent.
- **Support** measures that enhance the effectiveness of existing local revenue sources to meet current and future public service demands.
- **Support** methods to enable local efforts to collect due and payable local taxes, fees, fines and other revenues.
- **Support** continued state efforts for tax reform provided that such efforts remain revenue neutral for local government.
- **Support** continued revision to current law regarding the Communication Services Tax in a manner that is: 1) revenue neutral; 2) simplifies administration and collection of the current tax; 3) provides for a broad and equitable tax base; 4) provides for enhanced stability and reliability as an important revenue source for local government; and 5) provides the opportunity for market-based growth.
- **Support** preserving existing local (county) option sales taxes.
- **Support** an increase in funding for the State Aid to Libraries grant program which provides critical matching grant funding for operations to expand the capacity of digital and print resources of local libraries.
- **Support** legislation that allows senior staff to participate in executive sessions as subject matter experts to provide board members with technical knowledge necessary to make informed decisions.
- **Support** legislation to increase application and enforcement of current state statutes related to construction contracting fraud and expand penalties for contractors committing fraud or deceit in the practice of contracting, or mismanagement or misconduct that causes financial harm to customers.
- **Support** clarification of legislative intent of the PACE statute and a county's authority to regulate a Section 163.01(7), Florida Statutes, entity's activity within its jurisdiction; and **Support** legislative affirmation of a local government's home rule authority to regulate the PACE entities operating within its boundaries under Section 163.08, Florida Statutes. **Support** legislation requiring the Florida Attorney General's Office begin reviewing and investigating PACE program contractor issues for potential fraud and abuse.
- **Support** efforts to promptly and cost-effectively remove derelict vessels, prioritizing funds from vessel registration fees for removals within the county of collection. Support enhanced administrative efficiencies in the Derelict Vessel Grant Program by setting reasonable timelines for application decisions and enabling reimbursement of eligible costs before agreement execution, contingent on meeting grant criteria and timelines.
- **Support** legislation to amend the definition of "annexation" in Section 171.031(1), Florida Statutes to incorporate the inclusion of abutting rights-of-way and road and drainage easements of record.
- **Support** public records legislation that allows for the aggregation of public records requests.
- **Support** public records legislation that allows for designation of a public records request official.
- **Support** public records legislation that allows for online public records request to be responded to with county website with requested information.
- **Support** long-term and stable funding for the Clerk of Courts.



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- **Monitor** the implementation and impacts of 2024 SB 770 Improvements to Real Property (PACE) enhanced consumer protection measures, including financing agreements, and oversight of contractors.
- **Monitor** legislative changes to homeowners' insurance that may increase the cost of living for Charlotte County residents.
- **Oppose** shifting costs for state programs to local governments without a permanent identified funding source.
- **Oppose** any efforts that seek to modify or weaken the powers and duties of local governments granted under Chapter 125 & Chapter 200, Florida Statutes.

Natural Resources & Growth Management

- **Support** legislative intervention to maintain reasonable public access to Boca Grande beaches.
- **Support** funding for expansion of central sewer which includes constructing central wastewater service to properties with aging and failing On-Site Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems (septic tanks) that are contributing to the pollution of the impaired water bodies of Charlotte Harbor, the Peace River and the Myakka River.
- **Support** funding to expand and update the Burnt Store Water Reclamation Facility with advanced wastewater treatment capacity and supporting system upgrades to meet regulatory requirements.
- **Support** funding to expand and update the West Port Water Reclamation Facility using advanced granular sludge (AGS) treatment technology, ensuring the plant meets Advanced Wastewater Treatment standards and incorporates a new deep injection well to comply with FDEP requirements and protect water quality.
- **Support** language clarifying whether the "more restrictive and burdensome" provision in SB 180 (Emergencies) applies broadly to local ordinances or is limited to Comprehensive Plans and Land Development Regulations and narrowing the "...within 100 miles of the track of a storm" language to avoid an overly broad application.
- **Support** amending Florida Statute § 559.955 to protect neighborhood character by prohibiting visible outdoor storage of business-related items, ensuring home-based businesses remain secondary to residential use, and allowing local governments to address overly intensive business operations in residential areas.
- **Support** funding for the Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority for surface water supply expansion and transmission system expansion projects.
- **Support** the funding of the Water Protection and Sustainability Program within the Department of Environmental Protection and Water Management Districts for the development of alternative water supplies, water quality improvement projects, and comprehensive water infrastructure needs.
- **Support** dedicated, recurring funding for beach renourishment and inlet management. **Support** supplemental funding for beach renourishment and shoreline preservation projects related to the impacts of Hurricanes Helene and Milton.
- **Continue and expand** annual funding for the Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Program, including recurrent dedicated funding.
- **Support** increased funding of Florida Forever and Florida Rural and Family Lands programs.
- **Support** dedicated funding to ongoing water quality monitoring, committed water quality monitors in specified areas across Charlotte County, including real-time water quality monitoring for the Peace River, Myakka River, and Charlotte Harbor.



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- **Support** legislation that enhances regional and local financial capability to address water supply development with allocation flexibility in all available funding sources, increasing funding levels for Water Management Districts, and supporting Cooperative Funding Programs for capital projects.
- **Support** legislation that requires or incentivizes property owners to connect to reclaimed water lines when such lines are available and efforts to limit the issuance of permits for use of ponds and wells on sites where reclaimed water lines are available.
- **Support** a balanced distribution of funds for land acquisition and for water quality and quantity projects throughout the state, with equitable allocation irrespective of a project's urban or rural nature, or its coastal or inland location.
- **Support** legislation to amend Section 159.17, Florida Statutes, to authorize counties – as well as municipalities – that issue revenue bonds, to place liens that are prior to and on parity with state, county and municipal tax liens, on properties served by any water, sewer or gas systems for service charges until paid in full.
- **Support** legislation that allows a county to opt out from mandatory membership in a regional planning council.
- **Support** legislation that allows coastal communities to levy the 6th cent of Tourist Development Tax to support the local share of beach renourishment where critical erosion exists.
- **Support** a statutory change to Section 163.3178, Florida Statutes, that clarifies for state and local officials how risk reduction is evaluated in special flood hazard areas (SFHA), as shown on FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs).

Health & Human Services and Healthcare

- **Support** continued funding for community-based free and charitable clinics that provide emergency room diversion and basic safety net health services for the uninsured and indigent.
- **Support** increased funding for core mental health and substance abuse services.
- **Support** efforts to increase supportive housing, employment, and education initiatives for people with behavioral health issues and/or disabilities.
- **Support** diverting, medically assisting, or treating mentally ill persons outside of the criminal justice system through alternative community programs, such as Crisis Intervention Teams.
- **Support** providing life-saving interventions, medically assisted detoxification programs, and diversions from the criminal justice system for those suffering from opioid addiction.
- **Support** establishing a cap on growth in the individual county Medicaid costs under Section 409.915, Florida Statutes, to address the cost shifts that result from the transition to a Medicaid enrollee-based cost-sharing system.



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Transportation & Infrastructure

- **Support** funding for equipping traffic signal cabinets with UPS battery backups to provide power during an outage. These systems are crucial for maintaining safe and continuous traffic signal operation during power failures caused by storms, accidents, utility work, or grid failures.
- **Support** funding to replace 10 existing traffic signal cabinets with advanced ATC cabinets and equip 120 cabinets with CyberLock security systems, improving infrastructure safety, reliability, and compatibility with next-generation transportation technologies.
- **Support** funding for capital investments in stormwater infrastructure that will optimize maintenance practices, prioritize rehabilitation, and enhance flood resilience.
- **Support** Charlotte County Airport Authority's efforts to connect Challenger Blvd to Piper Road.
- **Support** funding for the expansion of Harborview Road, a critical evacuation route and SIS alternative roadway for Charlotte County.
- **Support** efforts encouraging FDOT to assume responsibility for the Bermont Road corridor to ensure efficient transportation infrastructure and connectivity, by working cooperatively with other regional partners, to appropriately place this roadway back on the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS).
- **Support** efficient and effective government by reducing the requirement for mandatory independent construction engineering and inspections (CEI) services on projects that have less than 50% in state funding.
- **Support** a restructure of the formula and methodology used in the distribution of gas tax funds and a review of the methodology of state prioritization (criteria) and funding for transportation projects.
- **Support** a review of state criteria for roads to be designated SIS (state roads). Charlotte County believes there are roads within our jurisdiction that meet the criteria and should be designated state roads as a part of the SIS.
- **Support** funding for critical transportation projects contained in the workplan for district one for Charlotte County.



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Public Safety

- **Support** funding for a replacement fire training tower to meet the evolving training needs of the Fire Department as the county and its Public Safety operations continue to grow.
- **Support** funding for improvements and expansion of the Charlotte County Emergency Operations Center to ensure operational and tactical efficiency during emergency activation.
- **Support** funding for a warehouse to securely store Sheriff's Office equipment used during natural or manmade disaster events, ensuring these assets remain protected and ready for deployment.
- **Support** raising the 911 fee to accommodate increased expenses and expansion of technology to continue providing high quality of service to citizens.
- **Support** initiatives to enhance roadway safety by prohibiting the handheld use of wireless communication devices while driving and requiring "hands-free" operation.
- **Support** funding for the county's utilities communication and cybersecurity infrastructure.
- **Support** Sunshine law exemption for County elected officials to be able to discuss emergency related issues during a local state of emergency.
- **Support** public records legislation that exempts the home addresses of security personnel and county administrators. Reducing the likelihood of further security issues is a county priority.
- **Support** public records legislation that exempts security "operations" meetings.
- **Oppose** legislation that limits the ability of county EMS providers to be reimbursed for out-of-network transports.
- **Support** maintaining a countywide regulatory system for EMS through the current Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (COPCN) process.
- **Support** efforts to stop opioid trafficking and increased penalties for dealers and traffickers whose actions result in loss of life.
- **Support** legislation that reduces jail expenses by setting a reimbursement amount paid by counties to medical providers for health care services for inmates and arrestees at no higher than the established Medicare rate plus 10%, the same rate as currently charged to the Department of Corrections, unless there is an existing contract in place or a business practice providing a lower rate.
- **Support** continued efforts to obtain Medicaid eligibility for persons incarcerated in county jails while waiting disposition of their cases and to ensure that existing Medicaid benefits are not terminated during incarceration (federal and state).