



March 25, 2024

The Honorable Ron DeSantis  
Governor, State of Florida  
Plaza Level 05, The Capitol  
400 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 23299

Re: Letter of Support for Florida's 2024-2025 Budget

Dear Governor DeSantis:

On behalf of the entire Charlotte County Commission, I am writing this letter in support of several budget items of interest to Charlotte County and to thank you for your strong leadership in hurricane recovery efforts that have been so important to Charlotte County and to all Southwest Florida. Southwest Florida has seen difficult times in the devastation of Hurricane Ian and in the more recent flood damage of Hurricane Idalia, but your thoughtful leadership before, during and after the storms brought us through many challenges and has been paramount to our successful recovery.

Charlotte County has taken to heart the lessons learned from these disasters and adopted legislative priorities that address the needs of the residents of Charlotte County as revealed in the aftermath of Hurricanes Ian and Idalia. The county's budget priority projects have focused primarily on disaster mitigation, preparation, response, and recovery that will be beneficial to the Southwest Florida region and beyond.

The budget includes \$1,500,000 for the Charlotte Sports Park Event Plaza and Activation Space (See Line Item- 2347A, SF 3316 (Senator Albritton), HF 2952 (Representative Roach). This activation space can be utilized as a staging area and/or Point of Distribution (POD) after a disaster or for the staging of crucial supplies and equipment pre-landfall of a storm. It will also provide a suitable venue for critical in-person communication, information, and training. Of regional significance, this space will benefit residents of Charlotte, Sarasota and DeSoto counties through use for staging supplies and equipment for the POD post-disaster and for enhancing communication, information and training pre-disaster and post-disaster. These PODs will aid in expediting the stabilization and recovery efforts for Southwest Florida. When not in use for emergency purposes, the venue is suitable for community activities and events.

Charlotte County is planning ahead for future regional emergency preparedness and response with the \$1,000,000 appropriation for the Charlotte Sports Park Pre- and Post-Disaster Volunteer Host Facility and Dormitory (See Line item 2725, SF 3367 (Senator Albritton), HF 2951

#### **BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

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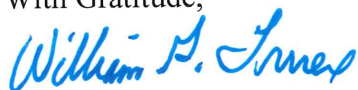
(Representative Roach). This facility will be used for the housing of community emergency response team (CERT), emergency search & rescue, recovery, mass care, debris removal and utility restoration responders which are critical to the immediate disaster response and long-term recovery of a disaster impacted community. The site will provide a prepared base camp location for agencies providing emergency response to Charlotte County and surrounding communities in the entire Southwest Florida region, and housing of disaster response personnel and volunteers during periods of emergency declaration. Base camp operations will support search and rescue, recovery, mass care, debris removal, and utility restoration. The dormitory may also house the National Guard. When not in use for this purpose, the facility can provide dormitory housing for spring training and year-round player development for the Tampa Bay Rays.

The budget also includes \$1,250,000 for the Flood Monitoring & Response Network (See Line Item-1732A, HF 3593 (Representative Grant), SF 3317 (Senator Albritton). Hurricane Idalia underscored the need for enhanced water elevation and flow monitoring systems in order to better predict and prepare areas susceptible to flooding. This project is for the design and installation of a stormwater system elevation gage network and flood warning system to provide emergency response staff with the necessary tools to quickly assess and act on potential life-threatening flood events. The county will partner with the United States Geological Survey to install telemetry-capable flow and/or elevation gages in title areas around the county such as the Myakka River, Charlotte Harbor and Lemon Bay. This data will be used in the future development of a comprehensive stormwater model and to develop pollutant loading modes and monitoring programs to better target pollution “hot spots.”

For many years now, the county has prioritized its legislative efforts on water quality issues. This year, the budget includes \$2,000,000 for the Phase 1 Lakeview Midway Septic-to-Sewer Conversion projects (See Line Item - 1732A, HF 3594 (Representative Grant), SF 3429 (Senator Albritton). These funds will be used for constructing central wastewater service to 2,172 properties to replace aging and failing on-site wastewater treatment and disposal Systems (OSTDSs) that are contributing to the pollution of the impaired water bodies of Charlotte Harbor, the Peace River and the Myakka River. Of note, our Midway/Lakeview project is not eligible for current grant programs, so a state appropriation is both necessary and appropriate.

Overall, your support for these projects would assist Charlotte County with the important state interests of improving Florida’s disaster resilience, economic development, and quality of life. On behalf of the entire Charlotte County Commission, we greatly appreciate your consideration.

With Gratitude,



William G. Truex, Chairman  
Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners

cc: Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners  
The Honorable State Senator Ben Albritton  
The Honorable State Representative Michael Grant  
The Honorable State Representative Spencer Roach