



# STATE BUSINESS AGENDA

Building a Positive Business Environment  
While Enhancing Our Community's Quality of Life

## The Voice of Business:



Business & Community Resiliency



Economic Development



Education & Workforce Innovation



Health & Workforce Wellness



Natural Resources



Transportation & Infrastructure



Tax & Regulation



## WE SUPPORT

### Business & Community Resiliency

- Funding and incentives for local governments to harden critical infrastructure by adding redundancy, capacity, cybersecurity, and inter-community connectivity to all major utilities.
- Investments to increase the capacity of roads, bridges, seaports, and airports that help facilitate a safe and efficient evacuation, the ability to return to work or home, and supply chain resilience enabling continuous distribution of critical food and medical supplies to local emergency centers during times of need.
- Uniform standards for emergency communications between local government, business, and utilities to enhance coordinated responses during disasters.
- Continued and expanded financial support for barrier island beach renourishment projects and methods to improve the sustainability of future renourishment efforts.
- Policies that expedite permitting processes for disaster recovery, infrastructure hardening, and energy resiliency to ensure faster recovery from natural disasters and mitigate added costs based on delays.
- Grant programs and expansion of emergency bridge loan parameters to facilitate investment in preventative measures and business recovery.

### Economic Development

- Continued funding for the Jobs Growth Grant Fund as well as the development of future workforce training programs and community infrastructure.
- Funding for Visit Florida to ensure the state is a premier destination for visitors nationally and internationally.
- Modify population size requirement for designation of rural area of opportunity to support rural economic development.
- Continued expansion of workforce housing solutions, including fully funding Sadowski funds for the State Housing Initiatives Partnership program (SHIP) and the State Apartment Incentive Loan (SAIL) program.

### Education & Workforce Innovation

#### Early Learning

- Amending the initial eligibility criteria for working families to access state funded childcare assistance, to align with Florida's growing economy to ensure access to quality care.
- Funding for universal full-day Pre-K in public schools.
- A clear and consistent statewide funding formula for school readiness.

#### VPK – 12

- An annual increase in the Base Student Allocation commensurate with the rate of inflation and cost of living increases to ensure school systems can meet the rising costs in every aspect of their business, including transportation.

## THE VOICE OF BUSINESS - ABOUT THE CHAMBER

Founded in 1889, the Manatee Chamber of Commerce has been the voice of businesses in the greater Manatee County region for more than 135 years. We support strengthening business development and expansion opportunities, enhancing workforce development resources, improving our natural environment, expanding access to quality early learning and post-secondary education, broadening access to health care, and investing in area transportation networks and key infrastructure. With the support and investment of our 2,200+ business members, employing a workforce of more than 85,000, we work to grow our economy, support the business community, and enhance our region's quality of life.

- Including Pre-Kindergarten classroom teachers to the definition of K-12 classroom teachers so that state resources can be used for VPK classrooms and supports.
- After declaration of a State of Emergency that results in the closure of schools, authorize School Districts flexibility to adjust school calendars and locations for students, teachers, and staff.

## Higher Ed

- Funding local higher education initiatives that increase student access, provide skill training to residents displaced from the workforce, and meet critical employment needs.
- Measures to increase the local talent pipeline in high demand sectors such as education, healthcare, and STEM-related fields.
- Bonding of Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) funds for workforce education projects and to address critically deferred maintenance.
- School District of Manatee County's request for funding for the Aviation Maintenance Technician (AMT) School at SRQ.
- State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota (SCF) students are funded relative to and in alignment with the Florida College System institutions, including \$17 million in additional recurring funding.
- State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota's request for \$9 million to complete Phase 1 of its new Parrish campus.
- Operational funding for the University of South Florida and fixed capital outlay for the USF Sarasota-Manatee Nursing/STEM building.

## Workforce

- Policy measures that expand participation in pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs with industry stakeholders.
- Legislation and investments in workforce education programs for performance-based industry certifications that grow our talent pipeline for employment in high demand fields including STEM-related careers.

## Health & Workforce Wellness

- Expanded access to and participation in education and training within the medical field, including the funding of additional medical residency slots to attract more physicians to Florida, create jobs, expand the pool of healthcare workers, slow our rate of exporting Florida-educated physicians to other states, and address employee shortages in the healthcare sector.
- Florida-based solutions to capitalize on federal dollars available to decrease insurance costs, increase coverage and improve access for Florida's uninsured residents.
- Measures to expand access to behavioral health prevention and early intervention, treatment, and supportive services including funding to address the mental health crisis occurring at the VPK through high school levels.
- Measures that positively impact access to care and outcomes, including increased access to worksite wellness programs, telehealth, innovative programs, pilot projects, new technology, and Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs).

## Natural Resources

- Allocation of funding for water resource projects including water quality improvement with a focus on reducing harmful algae blooms and alternative water supply development.
- Funding of stormwater improvement projects to improve resiliency, capacity, and safety.
- Allocation of funding for Florida Forever for acquisition of conservation lands.
- Legislation that creates a more transparent regulatory process with increased accountability as well as reduced costs, unnecessary duplication, and avoidable burdens on stakeholders.



## WE SUPPORT

### Transportation & Infrastructure

- Consideration of all alternatives and funding sources that will maximize east-west and north-south capacity throughout the County.
- Allocating all Transportation Trust Funds available to support transportation projects in the FDOT work program.
- Prioritize safety, including FDOT Target Zero initiative, to reduce transportation-related serious injuries and deaths across Florida.
- Regional solution-based transit projects acknowledging Manatee County growth towards Hillsborough County and addressing gaps.
- Legislation that authorizes a sustainable revenue stream, including capturing revenue generation from electric vehicles and other diverse modes of transportation, for local and state governments to improve aging transportation infrastructure.
- Funding and programs that increase broadband and cellular accessibility and resiliency including encouraging private investment in the deployment of infrastructure including rural and underserved areas.
- Funding for SeaPort Manatee to acquire land directly adjacent to the port as outlined in its Master Plan.
- Funding for FDOT statewide priority projects through which SeaPort Manatee could leverage federal grants, private funding, and other sources for development of cargo capacity and laydown area.

### Tax and Regulation

- Complete elimination of the Commercial Lease Tax (Business Rent Tax).
- Preserve all trust fund dollars for their intended purposes.
- Legislation that provides additional stability, capacity, and affordability in the commercial and residential property insurance market.
- Modifications to social benefits systems that will allow for a gradual exit-path for working families, including enhanced access to childcare benefits, and eliminate the unintended consequences of the "benefits cliff" for our workforce.
- Continued efforts to reduce business-related taxes including the Communication Services Tax (CST) and Florida's corporate income tax.



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