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Governor Scott: It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget Makes Priority Investments for Florida's Children

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Governor Rick Scott today highlighted investments in the It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget that support Florida's children.

Governor Scott said, "This Budget provides an historic increase in funding to help Florida's most vulnerable children. We must do everything possible to protect Florida's children and that's why we are putting an additional 270 child protective investigators on the ground and lowering caseloads for existing investigators. This Budget will give our investigators the additional tools and resources needed to protect children."

- **More Child Protective Investigators:** The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget provides \$18.6 million to the Department of Children and Families for an additional 270 child protective investigators (CPIs). This includes 191 investigators to lower caseloads to within recommended standards at 10 cases per CPI. The funding also includes 79 CPIs to expand a pilot project across six more counties to pair CPIs for the most high risk cases where households experience domestic violence, mental health or substance abuse.
- **Additional Funding for Sheriff CPI Offices:** The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget provides \$8.1 million in new funding for the six counties where local sheriffs conduct child protective investigations. All funding is allocated using a new distribution formula according to the risk-adjusted caseload of each county. This new formula will ensure that funds follow the children at risk of or suffering from abuse and neglect who need protection.
- **Child Protection Teams:** The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget provides an additional \$2.8 million for medically directed, multidisciplinary teams that assess the health, safety and risk of children to assist DCF in alleged child abuse or neglect cases.
- **Healthy Families:** The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget increases funding for Healthy Families by \$5 million to expand home visiting services for expectant and new parents whose children are at risk of abuse or neglect. Healthy Families is a nationally accredited, evidence-based program that has been proven to reduce

incidents of child abuse and neglect in at-risk households by improving parenting skills and strengthening families.

- **Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence:** The Budget provides \$2.5 million in new funding to implement evidence-based practices related to child safety focus planning for domestic violence workers with cases where there is a co-occurrence of child abuse and domestic violence.
- **Family Intensive Treatment Teams:** The Budget supports \$5 million in new funding to implement evidence-based practices for treating parent's mental health and substance abuse disorders that put their child at risk of maltreatment.
- **Local Community Based Care Lead Agencies:** The Budget supports \$6 million in new funding to the state's primary foster care providers for direct services to children and families to improve child protection and abuse prevention services. An additional \$4 million is also provided to support case managers who handle child welfare cases.
- **Human Trafficking:** The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget provides \$3 million for safe houses and rehabilitative services to help children who have been victimized and traumatized through the vicious criminal world of human trafficking.
- **Maintenance Adoption Subsidies:** The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget provides an additional \$28.7 million to fully fund the increase in the number of children with special needs adopted by Florida families.

Interim Department of Children and Families Secretary Mike Carroll said, "The Governor has shown steadfast support for the families and children our department is called to serve. The increase in funding will allow us to make strategic improvements that will further our goal to protect Florida's most vulnerable."

Seminole County Sheriff Donald F. Eslinger said, "Child protection investigations are crucial to the safety of Florida families, and Governor Scott recognizes the value law enforcement brings to these services. I am pleased the Governor has committed to providing additional funding for the sheriff's offices that have taken on the mission to serve these children."

Shelly Katz, Chief Operating Officer of Children's Home Society and Chair of the Florida Coalition for Children (FCC) said, "We commend the Governor's office, legislature and the Department for their efforts to thoughtfully craft policy changes and target budget increases aimed at improving the safety of children and success of families. We are especially appreciative of their recognition of the critical and demanding job of case managers."

Shawn Salamida, Vice President of Administrative Services at Community Partnership for Children and Vice Chair of the FCC said, "The services provided to

struggling parents are the tools we use to mend families. We appreciate the Governor and our legislative committees seeing the critical need for these services that are essential to protecting at-risk children, and allocating additional funds to support them.”

Carol McNally, Executive Director of Healthy Families Florida said, “Governor Scott’s investment to expand Healthy Families Florida is a historic commitment to the children and families in our state. Healthy Families Florida provides an evidence-based home visiting program that is proven to prevent child abuse in high-risk families, and that means fewer children suffering abuse and entering foster care, and more children growing up safe, nurturing homes.”

Mike Hansen, President of the Florida Council for Community Mental Health said, “The Governor's support of mental health services in our state solidifies his commitment to the full picture of family safety. By investing \$4.5 million into new community action teams for at risk children, our providers will be able to give intensive team-based, family-focused, comprehensive services to families within Florida's child welfare system.”

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