

The Focus on Florida's Future Budget

Statewide Overview

Q: How does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget compare to the current year?

- The budget is \$114.4 billion. This is a \$4.6 billion decrease compared to the current year \$119.1 billion budget.
- The General Revenue portion of the budget is \$46 billion, which is 3.3 percent less than the current General Revenue budget of \$47.6 billion.

Q: How many reserve dollars are included in the budget?

- \$6.4 billion in unallocated General Revenue
- \$4.8 billion in the Budget Stabilization Fund
- \$1.9 billion in unallocated Trust Funds
- \$1.0 billion in the Emergency Preparedness and Response Fund
- \$2.2 billion in the Florida Reinsurance Assistance and Optional Reinsurance Assistance Programs
- **\$16.3 billion in Total Reserves**

Q: How many state positions are included in the budget?

- There are 112,812 state positions in the budget. This is a net decrease of 1,024 FTE over the Fiscal Year 2023-24 budget.

Q: What trust fund sweeps are included in the Focus on Florida's Future Budget?

- The budget sweeps \$50 million in surplus funds:
 - Department of Financial Services
 - \$5 million from the Financial Institutions' Regulatory Trust Fund
 - \$10 million from the Regulatory Trust Fund/Office of Financial Regulation
 - Department of Health
 - \$20 million from the Grants and Donations Trust Fund
 - Department of Business and Professional Regulation
 - \$10 million from the Professional Regulation Trust Fund
 - Florida Gaming Control Commission
 - \$5 million from the Pari-Mutuel Wagering Trust Fund

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Q: After 11 years of actuarial surpluses ended in 2008, the FRS Pension Plan now has been underfunded for fifteen consecutive years. As of July 1, 2023, the plan's liabilities exceeded its assets by \$42.0 billion, translating into a funded ratio of 81.4 percent. How does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget address this deficit?

- For the past five fiscal years, the Governor recommended and the Legislature agreed to fully fund both the normal cost and the unfunded actuarial liability at an additional cost to the state.
- The budget again implements the recommendations of the independent actuary and fully funds both the normal cost and the unfunded actuarial liability. In addition, the Governor proposes a \$1.0 billion additional paydown of the UAL during Fiscal Year 2024-25 – improving the plan's funded status by 0.4 percent.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget recommend any changes to the retirement benefits offered by the Florida Retirement System?

- The budget increases the employer contribution to the investment accounts of employees participating in the FRS Investment Plan by one percent of the member's salary to ensure that these employees are better positioned financially during their retirement.
- In addition, the Governor increases the pension amounts to be received by retired members of the FRS by three percent to ensure that former employees also will be better positioned to cope with the recent rise in inflation caused by harmful federal fiscal policies.

Education

Early Learning

Q: What is the budget for early learning?

- The budget includes more than \$1.6 billion in funding for our state's youngest learners.

Q: What additional funding is provided for Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK)?

- The budget includes a total of \$450 million for Florida's VPK program. This investment increases the base student allocation for the school year and summer programs from \$2,941 per student and \$2,511 per student to \$3,096 per student and \$2,646 per student, respectively. VPK will prepare approximately 138,000 four and five-year olds for kindergarten.
- The budget also includes \$6.9 million for the establishment of the VPK Summer Bridge Program for students who score below the tenth percentile on the second administration of the Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring (CPSM) System.

Q: How does the budget provide for improvements in the quality of early learning programs?

- The budget provides funding for the following early learning initiatives:
 - T.E.A.C.H. – \$10 million maintained for early childhood teacher scholarships;
 - Help Me Grow – \$4.5 million is maintained to connect children and families with information, resources, and developmental services to enhance health, behavior, and learning in the development of young children;
 - Teacher Training – \$3 million maintained for statewide professional development to improve child care instructor quality; and
 - Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) – \$3.9 million maintained to deliver high quality School Readiness curriculum directly to parents so they may strengthen the cognitive and early literacy skills of at-risk children.

Q: What funding is provided for the School Readiness Program?

- The budget includes \$1.11 billion for students participating in the School Readiness Program.

K-12 Public Education

Q: Does the budget include an increase in the Base Student Allocation in the FEFP?

- The budget recommends an increase of \$107 in the Base Student Allocation (BSA) over Fiscal Year 2023-24, of which \$200 million of the \$625.3 million in funding generated must be used for salary increase for eligible teachers and other instructional personnel in the manner that best fits the school district's needs.

Q: Does the budget maintain the funding provided in Fiscal Year 2023-24 for salary increases for Florida's teachers?

- The budget increases the funding provided to increase teacher salaries from \$1 billion to \$1.25 billion.
 - Under the proposal, the Governor continues to provide school district's the ability to utilize the increase in their allocation to provide salary increases to eligible teachers and other instructional personnel in the manner that best fits the school district's needs.

Q: What is the budget for K-12 education in the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP)?

- The budget invests a record \$27.8 billion in total funding for the FEFP. This results in a per-student funding amount of \$8,842, an increase of \$175 over the Fiscal Year 2023-24 second calculation.

Q: How does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget consider the required local effort in the FEFP?

- The required local millage rate is maintained at the Fiscal Year 2023-24 statewide level of 3.189.

Q: Is there funding for mental health initiatives in the budget?

- Yes, the budget provides an increase of \$20 million, for a total of \$180 million, in funding for the mental health allocation in the FEFP.

Q: Is there funding for school safety in the budget?

- Yes, the budget includes the following safety initiatives:
 - \$290 million, an increase of \$40 million, for the safe schools component of the FEFP;
 - \$6.5 million is maintained for the Guardian Program that will be used to certify and train school guardians and provide a one-time stipend of \$500;
 - \$5.5 million is maintained for the Mental Health Awareness and Assistance Training;

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- \$845,000 is maintained for the Florida Safe Schools Assessment Tool;
- \$3 million is maintained to continue providing a centralized integrated data repository and data analytics resources to improve access to timely, complete and accurate information integrating data from: social media; the Department of Children and Families; the Department of Law Enforcement; the Department of Juvenile Justice; and local law enforcement;
- \$42 million is maintained for public school hardening grants;
- \$5.8 million is maintained for the state-wide transparency tool;
- \$6.4 million is maintained to continue providing school districts access to a mobile panic alert system that is capable of connecting multiple first responder agencies;
- \$6.5 million is maintained to implement safe school technology systems; and
- \$5 million is provided for District Threat Management Coordinators.

Q: Is security funding for Jewish Day Schools included in the budget?

- Yes, in addition to elevated funding appropriated during 2023's Special Session C, the budget provides \$10 million to hire school safety officers, enhance safety measures, upgrade equipment facilities and technology, and increase security services to ensure children at Florida Jewish Day Schools can learn in a safe environment.

Q: Does the budget provide funding for initiatives that promote computer science?

- Yes, the budget maintains Fiscal Year 2023-24 funding of \$10 million to continue providing professional development and fund costs associated with training for teachers to earn educator certificates or industry certifications in computer science. The initiative also provides bonuses to teachers who earned an educator certificate or industry certification who are teaching computer science courses.

Q: Does the budget include funding for initiatives that promote civic education?

- Yes, the budget:
 - Maintains \$1.5 million in funding to expand the Florida Civics and Debate Initiative;
 - Maintains \$3.5 million in funding to provide support to school districts for the improvement of civic literacy for Florida's students using regional civics literacy captains and coaches;
 - Includes \$2.8 million in funding for the Civics Professional Development Initiative that will support professional development events focused on the new civics and government standards; and

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- Includes \$45 million in funding for the Florida Civics Seal of Excellence Program that will allow 15,000 educators to receive a \$3,000 stipend for completing the Florida Civics Seal of Excellence endorsement coursework.

Q: Does the budget include funding for initiatives that provide alternate pathways for individuals to enter the teaching profession?

- Yes, the budget maintains Fiscal Year 2023-24 funding of \$10 million for a first come, first served recruitment bonus for retired military veterans, and retired first responders who commit to joining the teaching profession. Heroes are required to teach a minimum of two years to keep the bonus. Individuals teaching in a high-demand area may receive an additional bonus.
- The program will:
 - Provide a bonus of \$4,000 for 2,000 military veterans and retired first responders.
 - Provide an additional \$1,000 for 1,000 individuals teaching in high-demand areas.
 - Waive the initial certification and exam fees for first responders, which is a current benefit that military veterans and their spouses already receive.

Q. Does the Governor include any initiatives to address the need for additional teachers in Florida's public schools?

- Yes, the Governor's recommendation includes the following initiatives to recruit and retain great teachers:
 - \$1.25 billion, an increase of \$200 million, for the Teacher Salary Increase Allocation in the FEFP. Under the proposal the Governor will allow school districts to utilize the increase in their allocation to provide salary increases to eligible teachers and other instructional personnel in the manner that best fits the school district's needs.
 - \$10 million is provided to implement the Heroes Initiative, which is a first come, first served recruitment bonus for retired military veterans, and retired first responders who commit to joining the teaching profession.

Higher Education

Q: Does the budget include any tuition increases?

- No, the budget does not include any increases in tuition or fees.

Q: What does the budget include for Florida state colleges and universities?

- The budget includes state operating funding for Florida's higher education system of \$1.7 billion for Florida colleges, and \$3.7 billion for Florida universities.

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- The budget includes a total of \$24.4 million for the Florida Postsecondary Academic Library to provide students with e-resources, technical support, and more. \$11 million is provided to Florida colleges and \$13.4 million to Florida universities.

Q: Does the budget provide performance funding for workforce education, colleges, and universities? What metrics will be used to distribute the funds?

- Yes, the budget includes performance funding to reward Florida's career technical centers, Florida College System Institutions, and the State University System institutions for their performance.
- The budget includes performance funding in the following areas:
 - \$8.5 million in funding for district workforce programs to be allocated based on students earning industry certifications in high-demand areas;
 - \$20 million in funding for state colleges to be allocated based on students earning industry certifications in high-demand areas;
 - \$30 million for state colleges, through the 2+2 Student Success Incentive Fund and Work Florida Student Success Incentive Fund; and
 - \$645 million in funding for the State University System. Performance will be based on 10 metrics including: percent of graduates employed or continuing education, average wages of employed graduates, and graduation rates.
 - \$150 million for the recruitment and retention of highly qualified faculty at our state universities and colleges. Of the total, \$100 million is included for the State University System and \$50 million is included for the Florida College System.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding for the Open Door Grant Program?

- Yes. The budget includes a total of \$35 million in funding, \$15 million for School District Workforce Education Institutions and \$20 million for Florida College System Institutions, to continue the Open Door Grant Program. The program is designed to create a demand-driven supply of credentialed workers for high-demand occupations and expand the affordability of workforce training and credentialing.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding for the Pathways to Career Opportunities Grant Program?

- The budget includes \$20 million, for the Governor's Pathways to Career Opportunities Grant Program to establish or expand pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs for high school and college students. The budget maintains \$5 million in funding for the Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Program for individuals who currently hold an associate's degree and wish to

enter the teaching field.

Q: What does the budget include for Florida's Historically Black Colleges and Universities?

- \$17 million in operating funds to Bethune-Cookman University.
- \$7 million in operating funds to Florida Memorial University.
- \$7.5 million in operating funds Edward Waters University.
- \$110.5 million in operating funds to Florida A&M University.
- \$10 million for facility hardening grants.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding for the Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute?

- Yes, the budget provides funding of \$24.5 million, an increase of \$4 million, for the Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute to continue providing research and education related to cancer.

Student Financial Aid and Assistance

Q: What student financial aid funding does the budget include for private higher education institutions?

- The budget provides \$122.5 million for the Effective Access to Student Education (EASE) Grants, which will provide approximately 35,000 eligible private school students with an average of \$3,500 in tuition assistance.

Q: What other state funded scholarship programs are in the budget for Student Financial Aid?

- The budget includes funding for the following state scholarship programs:
 - Florida Student Assistance Grant – Public Full and Part Time: \$236 million
 - Florida Student Assistance Grant – Private: \$23.6 million
 - Florida Student Assistance Grant – Postsecondary: \$6.4 million
 - Florida Student Assistance Grant – Career Education: \$3.3 million
 - The maximum award of the above four Florida Student Assistance Grants is \$3,260.
 - Children and Spouses of Deceased or Disabled Veterans: \$19.4 million
 - Florida Work Experience: \$1.6 million
 - Rosewood Family Scholarships: \$256,747
 - Florida Farmworker Scholarship Program: \$272,151
 - Honorably Discharged Graduate Assistance Program: \$1 million
 - Randolph Bracy Ocoee Scholarship Program: \$305,000
 - Dual Enrollment Scholarship: \$18 million
 - Law Enforcement Academy Scholarship Program: \$5 million
 - Out-of-State Law Enforcement Equivalency Reimbursement Program:

- \$1 million
- Dual Enrollment Teacher Scholarship: \$3.5 million

Q: What does the budget include for the Bright Futures Scholarship?

- The budget includes a total of \$603 million for the Bright Futures Scholarship Program.
 - Funding ensures the Florida Academic Scholars award will continue to cover 100 percent of tuition and fees and the Florida Medallion Scholars award will continue to cover 75 percent of tuition and fees for qualifying students, for all semesters, including summer.
 - However, a Florida Medallion Scholar enrolled in an associate degree program at a Florida College System institution is eligible for an award equal to the amount necessary to pay 100 percent of tuition and fees.
 - Funding ensures Gold Seal Vocational Scholars awards and Gold Seal CAPE Scholars awards will continue to be awarded to eligible students enrolled in a career education or a certificate program.

Education Infrastructure

Q: How are Public Education Capital Outlay Funds (PECO) utilized in the budget?

- The August 2023 Public Education Capital Outlay Estimating Conference identified the cash amount available for appropriation from the PECO Trust Fund for Fiscal Year 2024-25 to be \$922.2 million.
- The PECO program addresses educational facility construction and fixed capital outlay needs for school districts, state colleges, state universities, and other public education programs.
- The budget includes more than \$922 million in funding for capital initiatives funded through PECO:
 - **Special Facility Construction**
 - \$180 million for Special Facility Construction projects for Hendry, Wakulla, Gilchrist, Gadsden, Glades, and Putnam counties.
 - **Higher Education Construction**
 - \$53 million for Florida College System remodeling and renovation construction needs.
 - \$163 million for State University System remodeling and renovation construction needs.
 - **Maintenance**
 - \$220 million for public charter school maintenance.
 - \$139 million for maintenance at the state colleges.
 - \$139 million for maintenance at the state universities.
 - \$11 million for lab school maintenance.

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- \$627,000 for Division of Blind Services maintenance.
- \$12 million for the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind maintenance.
- \$6.3 million for Public Broadcasting projects.

Environment

Q: What is included in the Focus on Florida's Future Budget to reach the Governor's new goal of \$3.5 billion investment in Everglades and water resources over the next four years?

- The budget includes more than \$1.1 billion for Everglades restoration and protection of water resources. This includes:
 - \$745.5 million for Everglades Restoration;
 - \$330 million for targeted water quality improvements, including TMDLs;
 - \$80 million for an Alternative Water Supply grant program;
 - \$50 million for Springs projects; and
 - \$55.5 million for water quality monitoring and to combat harmful algal blooms including blue-green algae and red tide.

Q: How does the budget specifically address water quality improvements?

- The budget includes \$330 million for targeted water quality improvements:
 - \$135 million for the expanded Water Quality Improvement Grant Program for projects to construct, upgrade or expand wastewater facilities, including septic to sewer conversions, stormwater management projects, and agricultural nutrient reduction projects.
 - \$100 million for the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) Protection Program for priority projects to reduce excess nutrients and improve water quality in the IRL.
 - \$50 million will focus specifically on achieving the Department of Environmental Protection's scientific nutrient reduction goals, called Total Maximum Daily Loads, as part of the plans set forth in adopted Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs).
 - \$20 million for wastewater and storm water projects that address water quality impairments and coral reef restoration in Biscayne Bay.
 - \$25 million for the Caloosahatchee River Watershed for priority projects to reduce excess nutrients and improve water quality.
- On top of this investment, the budget includes \$50 million for projects to restore Florida's world-renowned springs.

Q: How much is in the budget for Everglades Restoration?

- The budget provides more than \$745 million for Everglades Restoration. This funding includes:
 - \$550 million for Everglades Restoration, including the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan including the C-43 Reservoir.
 - \$64 million for the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir project.
 - \$50 million for projects in the Lake Okeechobee Watershed.

- \$81.5 million for dispersed water management and public private partnerships to provide additional water storage.

Q: What does the budget do to address harmful algal blooms and discharges from Lake Okeechobee?

- The budget includes more than \$55.5 million to specifically address algae blooms and red tide, including:
 - \$20 million for innovative technologies and short-term solutions to address algae blooms. This includes the harmful algal blooms and emergency red tide grant programs to help local governments to clean up their beaches and coastal areas to minimize the impacts of red tide to residents and visitors.
 - \$20 million for harmful algal blooms mitigation to implement water quality treatment technologies to combat harmful algal blooms in Lake Okeechobee.
 - \$4.7 million for the FWC Center for Red Tide and to support the Harmful Algal Bloom Task Force.
 - \$10.8 million for increased water quality monitoring, a water quality public information portal, and to support the Blue-Green Algae Task Force to focus on expediting progress toward reducing adverse impacts of blue-green algae blooms.
- Additionally, the budget invests \$330 million for targeted water quality improvements and \$745.5 million for Everglades Restoration, including \$161 million for continued investment in the C-43 reservoir, which will provide more than 55 billion gallons of water storage east of Lake Okeechobee. These projects will help reduce nutrient loading and provide critical water storage.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding for water storage south of Lake Okeechobee?

- The budget includes \$306 million for several water storage projects, many of these around Lake Okeechobee, which will collectively provide nearly 190 billion gallons of water storage once completed. Examples of these projects include:
 - \$161 million to continue the C-43 Reservoir, which will provide 55 billion gallons of water storage to protect estuaries.
 - \$81 million for dispersed water management, which will provide more than 24 billion gallons of water storage when projects are operational.
 - \$64 million for the EAA Reservoir, which will provide a minimum of 78 billion gallons of water storage when complete.

Q: What does the budget do to address water supply needs?

- The budget provides \$80 million for an alternative water supply grant program to help communities plan for and implement vital conservation, reuse and other alternative water supply projects.
- DEP will engage local governments, industry, citizens and other stakeholders through a targeted education and outreach campaign that focuses on the importance of conservation and reuse efforts and encourage Floridians to implement these efforts in their homes, businesses and communities.

Q: How much does the budget include for land acquisition?

- The budget contains \$125 million for the Florida Forever Program, including:
 - \$100 million for Florida Forever through DEP's Division of State Lands;
 - \$15 million for the Florida Communities Trust component of Florida Forever for funding to local governments and eligible non-profit environmental organizations for the acquisition of community-based parks, open space and greenways that further outdoor recreation and natural resource protection needs; and
 - \$10 million for the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP), which provides competitive recreational grants to local governments for the acquisition and/or development of land for public outdoor recreation.
- In addition, springs protection and water quality improvement projects may include land acquisition to protect water resources.

Q: How much does the budget include for the Rural and Family Lands Program for conservation easements?

- The budget provides \$100 million in recurring to protect important agricultural lands through the acquisition of permanent agricultural land conservation easements.

Q: How does the budget address resiliency?

- The budget provides more than \$157 million for the Resilient Florida Program, which will assist local governments with sea level rise planning and coastal resilience projects, in addition to protection of coral reef health.
- Coastal protection projects, include:
 - \$50 million for beach restoration projects;
 - \$3.5 million for removal of tires and other waste currently posing a threat to coral reefs; and
 - \$1.3 million for Florida's Coastal Zone Management Program.

Q: Does the budget dedicate any additional funding to coral reef restoration?

- The budget includes \$11.3 million to implement Florida's Coral Reef Restoration and Recovery Initiative to restore 25 percent of Florida's Coral Reef by 2050.

Q: How much is included in the budget for beach restoration?

- The budget includes \$50 million for statewide beach restoration to continue to address Florida's critically eroded shorelines.

Q: How much is included in the budget for state parks?

- The budget dedicates \$50 million to infrastructure improvements and resource management for the award-winning Florida State Park system.

Q: How much does the budget provide for waste management?

- The budget includes the following for waste management:
 - \$200 million – Underground Petroleum Storage Tank Cleanup
 - \$7 million – Dry Cleaning/Site Cleanup
 - \$4 million – Hazardous Waste/Site Cleanup

Q: Does the budget include funding for springs restoration?

- The budget provides \$50 million for springs protection and restoration projects.

Q: How does the budget address removing invasive Pythons from the Everglades?

- The budget includes more than \$3 million for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to remove pythons from the Everglades. Pythons are an invasive species that disrupt the natural food chain balance and have no natural predators, causing them to multiply without impediment and further threaten endangered species.

Q: What is in the budget for wildfire prevention?

- The budget provides \$30.2 million for wildfire prevention efforts.
 - \$12.4 million for replacement of wildfire equipment
 - \$11.9 million for road and bridge maintenance to allow for better access for land management and wildfire suppression activities
 - \$5.9 million for additional Wildfire Protection and State Forest operations.

Q: How much does the budget provide for the Citrus Industry?

- \$20.8 million for citrus, including:
 - \$8 million for Citrus Research
 - \$7.8 million for the Citrus Health Response Program (CHRP)
 - \$5 million to support consumer awareness efforts

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Q: How does the budget use Land Acquisition Trust Fund dollars?

- The budget provides more than \$1.6 billion of Land Acquisition Trust Fund dollars for a variety of conservation and restoration programs including Florida Forever land acquisition and management, Everglades restoration, springs restoration projects, beach management projects, and improvements to Florida's award-winning state parks.

Transportation and Economic Development

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding for affordable and workforce housing?

- The budget includes \$298.1 million to fully fund affordable and workforce housing. This includes \$89.5 million for the State Apartment Incentive Loan (SAIL) Program and \$208.6 million for the State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program (SHIP).
- The budget also includes \$100 million for the third year of the Hometown Heroes Housing Program, which helps make homeownership more affordable for eligible frontline community workers and other Florida families.

Q: What does the budget include for emergency management?

- The budget includes \$1.3 billion in federal and state funding for open federally declared disasters, so the state can continue to respond and recover from these disasters, as well as mitigate the impact of any future disasters or emergencies.

Q: Does the budget include Job Growth Grant funds to support Florida's continued economic recovery and development?

- The budget includes \$100 million for the Job Growth Grant Fund to support local infrastructure and job training projects targeted towards economic recovery and development.

Q: How much funding is in the budget to promote Florida tourism?

- The budget includes \$105 million to continue the vital state marketing and promotion efforts of VISIT FLORIDA.

Q: Is there funding in the budget targeted specifically to help small businesses?

- The budget includes \$175.2 million for the third phase of the State Small Business Credit Initiative, providing Florida's small businesses with essential access to additional growth and support funding.

Q: Is there funding in the budget to help recruit law enforcement officers to work in Florida?

- The budget includes \$20 million for another round of bonus payments for law enforcement officers who are new to the profession in the state, including those relocating from other states. This initiative will provide bonus payments of up to \$5,000 to eligible law enforcement officers.

Q: What is included in the Focus on Florida's Future Budget to help Florida's rural areas grow and prosper?

- \$25 million for the Rural Infrastructure Fund, to support local rural infrastructure projects such as roads, storm and wastewater systems, and telecommunications facilities.
- \$100 million for the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (B.E.A.D.) Program, to support broadband initiatives to expand high-speed internet deployment and access to Florida communities.
- \$88.1 million for the Small County Outreach Program (SCOP) to assist small county governments in repairing or rehabilitating county bridges, paving unpaved roads, addressing road-related drainage improvements, resurfacing or reconstructing county roads, or constructing capacity or safety improvements to county roads.
- \$26.5 million for the Small County Road Assistance Program (SCRAP) to assist small county governments in resurfacing or reconstructing county roads.
- \$66.7 million for the County Incentive Grant Program (CIGP) to provide grants to counties to improve transportation facilities located on the State Highway System or to relieve traffic congestion on the State Highway System.

Q: Does the budget include Community Development Block Grant funds for hurricane recovery and mitigation?

- The budget includes \$396 million in federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds directed toward local hurricane recovery and hardening efforts throughout the state. These funds include several CDBG programs, including CDBG Disaster Recovery Program for all named hurricanes since 2017 and CDBG Mitigation Program.

Q: What is in the budget to help ensure safe and secure elections in Florida?

- The budget includes \$21.6 million for state-level election oversight activities, with a focus on cybersecurity enhancements to Florida's election system. This amount includes:
 - \$2.5 million for Florida Voter Registration System modernization.
 - \$1 million for enhanced election security.

Q: What is the total budget for the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for Fiscal Year 2024-25?

- The budget includes \$15.6 billion for the Department of Transportation. Of this amount, \$14.5 billion goes toward the Transportation Work Program which supports transportation and infrastructure projects throughout the state.
- This investment will provide for the retention or creation of approximately 238,000 jobs. Every dollar invested in transportation is estimated to result in a return of up to \$4 in user and economic benefits to Florida's residents and businesses. Additionally, this helps to diversify Florida's economy.

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Q: What Florida transportation initiatives are supported in the budget?

- The budget provides \$14.5 billion for the Transportation Work Program, used for the construction and maintenance of Florida's roads, bridges, rails, seaports and other public transportation systems that grow the state's economy and improve the quality of life for our citizens. This includes:
 - \$5.4 billion for highway construction and maintenance to include 135 new lane miles.
 - \$1.9 billion in resurfacing to include 3,115 lane miles.
 - \$109.6 million in seaport infrastructure improvements, to ensure Florida's ports continue to have capacity while the rest of the nation struggles from supply chain backups at seaports.
 - \$334.4 million for aviation improvements.
 - \$381.7 million in scheduled repairs for 62 bridges and replacement of 15 bridges.
 - \$997.7 million investment in rail and transit projects.
 - \$210.1 million for safety initiatives.
 - \$215.3 million for community trail projects and \$70.3 million for the SunTrail Network.
- The budget also includes \$75 million to provide grant funding for development projects for vertiports, inland ports, seaports, intermodal logistic centers, and fuel pipelines, and \$25 million to expand the Truck Parking Improvement Program to increase the number of parking spots available in Florida for cargo hauling large trucks.

Q: What is the Moving Florida Forward Plan?

- With the highest net in-migration of any state in the nation, Florida has experienced increased road congestion since 2019. The Moving Florida Forward Plan is a traffic congestion relief plan championed by Governor DeSantis to spend over \$4 billion, including an additional \$630 million for Fiscal Year 2024-25, over the next several years to accelerate the development and completion of important transportation infrastructure projects.

Health and Human Services

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include support for Cancer Research?

- The budget invests more than \$232 million in cancer research funding, with \$60 million in funding to continue the Florida Cancer Innovation Fund to support innovative cancer research.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding to increase rates paid to Medicaid providers?

- The budget includes more than \$360 million to provide targeted rate increases to Medicaid and Home and Community Based Services Waiver providers. These increases include those for obstetric care providers, aimed at improving access to care for pregnant women, as well as for a variety of services included in the continuum of care for behavioral health.

Q: How much does the budget include for Behavioral Health Services?

- The budget provides more than \$294 million to provide additional support for the mental health treatment facilities, competency restoration services and to enhance suicide and crisis services. Additionally, funding will provide evidence based comprehensive treatment that seeks to reduce overdoses, unemployment and the incidence of hospitalization and homelessness.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include any initiatives related to the Opioid Settlement Agreement?

- The budget includes \$153.2 million from the Opioid Settlement Agreement. These funds support the Opioid Recovery Office to oversee the settlement funds and a Graduate Medical Education program to increase the number of psychiatric residents. These funds also invest in other initiatives that support education, treatment, and prevention for individuals with substance use disorders.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding for children who receive services through the Child Welfare System?

- The budget includes more than \$103 million to support those served by the child welfare system. Funding will support foster parents and caregivers and expand access to post-adoption supports provided to young adults adopted from the dependency system. In addition, funds will expand the existing program that provides adoption incentives to groups that include state employees, school district personnel, and law enforcement officers. Additional funds will provide for the expansion of those incentives for the adoption of children from the foster care system to health care practitioners and

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employees of local tax collectors. In addition, the one-time incentive amount will be increased from \$5,000 to \$10,000 and \$10,000 to \$25,000.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding for victims of human trafficking?

- The budget includes an additional \$6 million, for a total of \$11.3 million, to provide services for victims of human trafficking. The funds will support housing for additional survivors to support their recovery. In addition, the budget includes additional staffing to enhance prevention services and provide support for victims.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding for seniors?

- The budget includes an additional \$6 million, for a total of \$69.2 million, to serve additional seniors as part of the Alzheimer's Disease Initiative (ADI). This further strengthens Florida's position as a national leader in the provision of care for those with the disease and their families. ADI provides support for caregivers and individuals diagnosed or suspected of having Alzheimer's disease or other related memory disorders that interfere with daily living activities.
- Additionally, \$15 million is provided, for a total of \$119 million, to increase services through the Community Care for the Elderly Program and the Home Care for the Elderly Program. Funding will provide additional support for seniors at risk for out of home placement. These services and support include adult day care, respite for caregivers, home delivered meals, and minor home modifications allowing them to continue to live in their homes.
- The budget invests more than \$2 million in additional funding for the Florida Alzheimer's Center of Excellence (FACE). This initiative supports a person-centered, holistic care model focused on community support and equipping the medical system to provide early diagnoses, quality care management, and linkages to community services for persons living with dementia and their primary caregiver.
- The budget includes \$10 million to support rental assistance targeted to seniors who are faced with housing instability.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding for individuals served through the Agency for Persons with Disabilities?

- The budget provides \$79.6 million in new funding to allow additional individuals to be served through the Agency for Persons with Disabilities' waiver program.
- The budget also provides \$47.8 million for the continuation and expansion of the pilot project created in 2023 aimed at providing comprehensive services to individuals with developmental disabilities.

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- Funding is also provided to support the planning and implementation of a new waiver aimed at providing targeted services for adults with unique abilities that are entering adulthood.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding for Veterans?

- The budget invests \$8.9 million to support additional equipment and capital improvements for the State Veterans' Nursing Homes. Funding is also provided to continue more than \$2 million to assist veterans in training, networking, and mentoring throughout the state.
- The budget also \$102 million to begin the construction of the ninth State Veterans' Nursing Home in Collier County upon federal grant approval. Once this new nursing home is complete, Florida will have the most state-funded veterans' nursing homes in the nation.

Public Safety

Q: What is the recommended budget for public safety?

- The Focus on Florida's Future Budget recommends an additional \$502.7 million for necessary investments in public safety, including funding for safer and more modern correctional facilities, information technology enhancements, workload, and statewide prosecution issues.

Department of Corrections

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget cut funding for the Department of Corrections?

- No. The budget recommends an additional \$276.6 million above base to improve officer retention, increase inmate programming, make correctional facilities safer, enhance inmate mental health services, and make technology upgrades.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget address high Correctional Officer turnover and retention issues?

- Yes. Historic investments have been made in the base pay of the Correctional Officer series over the past two fiscal years and will continue to support that investment. The budget includes funds for:
 - Pay-Parity initiatives totaling \$13.3 million for Classification and Maintenance Personnel.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget provide any funding for maintenance and repair?

- Yes. The budget includes \$96.75 million above base for repairs and maintenance. This includes:
 - \$75 million to fund year one of a four-year Critical Safety Infrastructure Initiative to address major maintenance and repair projects.
 - \$9 million for environmental systems, renovations, and evidence facilities.
 - \$12 million for support facilities, including staff training facilities and evidence storage facilities.
 - \$750,000 to address necessary ADA accommodations and repairs.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget address the growing contraband issue in state prisons?

- Yes. The budget includes \$12 million for a variety of security equipment, including drone detection equipment, thermal fence cameras, drone support for K-9 operations, and license plate readers.

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- The budget also includes \$12.5 million to fund additional search and analytics resources, as well as privatizing entrance and exit staffing to allow certified officers to serve more secure posts.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget provide funding to improve the safety of correctional probation officers (CPOs)?

- Yes. The budget includes \$2 million to develop a comprehensive statewide plan to provide all certified firearms carrying CPOs with a Department issued weapon, holster, and other required accessories. Provided funds are anticipated to be able to purchase approximately 2,184 firearms, holsters, duty belts, and magazines.
- Additionally, the budget includes \$1.9 million to provide Department-issued uniforms to CPOs.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include any funds which would improve the day-to-day operations of Correctional facilities?

- The Focus on Florida's Future Budget includes 64 FTE and \$5.6 million to allow the Department of Corrections to hire additional security staff to accommodate the education expansion funded in Fiscal Year 2023-24.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget provide funding for technology upgrades?

- Yes. The budget includes \$23.2 million for year three of an anticipated five-year plan to modernize the 40-year-old Offender Based Information System (OBIS).

Department of Juvenile Justice

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget provide any funding for maintenance and repair?

- Yes. The budget includes \$15 million for general repairs and security maintenance projects, \$5 million of this total is proposed to be recurring funding.
- The budget also includes \$27.2 million to account for design and construction of a new regional detention center in Hillsborough County.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget enhance education provided to juveniles in the care of the Department?

- Yes. The budget includes an additional \$12 million, for a total of \$24 million, to continue the unified education system across the Department's 37 residential programs that was created in Fiscal Year 2023-24. The Florida Scholars Academy provides various educational opportunities and trade

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skills in high-demand occupations. With this total investment, the Florida Scholars Academy will be fully financed for operational needs.

Department of Law Enforcement

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding to advance the implementation of Gail's Law (statewide sexual assault tracking)?

- Yes. The budget includes \$600,000 for implementation of Gail's Law. Funds will allow the system to expand the program to forensic labs statewide.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding to combat the trafficking and sale of narcotics in Florida?

- Yes. The budget includes \$25 million to support law enforcement efforts to combat the opioid epidemic affecting Florida's communities by expanding the State Assistance for Fentanyl Eradication (S.A.F.E.) in Florida Program for the second year. The funds have and will continue to assist local law enforcement in combatting the illicit trafficking and sale of fentanyl within Florida. Funds will be provided to FDLE to be distributed to local agencies.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding to enhance the safety of law enforcement officers?

- Yes. The budget includes \$2 million for the Department of Law Enforcement to provide body armor to local law enforcement agencies, with a focus on agencies within fiscally constrained counties.

Department of Legal Affairs

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding to address workload issues at the Department of Legal Affairs?

- Yes. The budget includes \$5.8 million and 29 FTE to address the workload associated with prosecuting gang-related crime, violent crime, and drug activity within Florida.

Florida Commission on Offender Review

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include any funding associated with clemency?

- Yes. The budget includes \$178,483 and two FTE to address the increase of cases coming to the Clemency Board for consideration.

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Justice Administrative Commission

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding for the prosecution of cold cases?

- Yes. The budget includes \$302,818 and three FTE to establish the Cold Case Unit to pursue viable cold cases that have not yet been closed in order to bring justice for victims.

State Courts System

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget cut funding for the State Courts System?

- The budget provides an additional \$11.4 million and 50 FTE for Court-related issues including funds for due process resources, Child Support Hearing Officers, and case processing support. However, there is a corresponding reduction of \$4.5 million and 49 FTE of long-standing vacant positions.

General Government

Overview

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget propose sweeping any General Government trust funds?

- The budget sweeps \$30 million from surplus funds in General Government trust funds. These sweeps will not impact services or operations:
 - \$5 million from the Financial Institutions Regulatory Trust Fund in the Department of Financial Services.
 - \$10 million from the Regulatory Trust Fund in the Department of Financial Services/Office of Financial Regulation
 - \$10 million from the Professional Regulation Trust Fund in the Department of Business and Professional Regulation
 - \$5 million from the Pari-Mutuel Wagering Trust Fund in the Florida Gaming Control Commission

Financial Services

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funds for the FLAIR Replacement project, PALM?

- Yes, \$50 million is included for the continuation of the PALM project at the Department of Financial Services.

Q: When is PALM going to go into effect?

- The Cash Management System portion of PALM went live in July 2021, deploying treasury functionality to all agencies. The remaining portions of PALM, which are the Financials and Payroll, are scheduled to go live in January 2026.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funds for the My Safe Florida Home program?

- Yes, an additional \$100 million is provided for mitigation grants to continue to harden Florida homes and an additional \$7 million for grant administration.

Military Affairs

Q: What does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include for National Guard community-based programs that serve Florida's youth?

- The budget includes \$5.8 million in funding for the Florida Youth Challenge program. Florida Youth Challenge offers services to high school aged youths to ensure they have technical and job readiness skills as well as mentoring to

ensure they get their GED or graduate high school and move on to postsecondary education, the workforce or the military. The community-based program helps Florida's youth succeed.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding for repairs and maintenance of Florida National Guard armories?

- Yes, the budget includes \$15 million to support ongoing maintenance and repairs at armories throughout the state, which are used year-round for training and operations of the Florida National Guard.

Q: What is the Revitalization and Modernization Program (REVAMP) at the Department of Military Affairs and why is it necessary?

- REVAMP is a multi-year initiative, supported by year two funding of \$5 million, to renovate all 63 Florida National Guard readiness centers throughout the state. Major renovations are necessary to address failing infrastructure, life safety and ADA code compliance, and improved security to ensure the safety of our guardsmen and visitors.

Q: Which readiness centers will be renovated as part of REVAMP in year two?

- Year two will provide major renovation design to the following readiness centers: Starke, Chipley, Palmetto, and Dade City. Additionally, this funds renovations to the Tallahassee Naval Reserve property, Miramar training bay, Homestead training bay, West Palm Beach training bay, Zephyrhills generator, and Camp Blanding and Pensacola lighting upgrades. All the above facilities were last renovated more than 17 years ago.

Q: What does it mean for Camp Blanding to be a Level 2 facility and why does it currently not meet those standards?

- The National Guard ranks each of its facilities as Level 1-5 Training Centers (Level 1 being the highest standard) based on the types of training and facilities utilized at each location. Most of Florida's existing facilities are categorized between Level 5 and Level 3. Camp Blanding is currently the only location categorized as a Level 2 facility, meaning it supports simultaneous training for 5,000 to 11,999 guardsmen. Currently, Camp Blanding does not have the infrastructure to support this level of training, with only 3,000 beds and small live-fire and multi-purpose ranges and training facilities available.

Q: What happens if Camp Blanding continues to not meet Level 2 facility standards?

- Although Camp Blanding currently retains its Level 2 status, a continuing failure to meet federal standards may soon result in the removal of the facility's

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Level 2 status at a federal level and a potential reduction in the current Florida National Guard force allocation, which reduces the overall readiness of our Florida National Guard.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget fund new readiness centers for the Florida National Guard?

- Yes, the budget includes \$41.5 million to construct a readiness center on the Homestead Air Reserve Base (HARB) and demolish and assess current facilities on HARB.
- The budget also includes \$7.1 million for the design of six new facilities to include two new readiness centers, one readiness center expansion and three new maintenance shops located throughout the state.
- Additionally, \$13.2 million is included for land acquisition in Polk County, Hillsborough County and St. Johns County for future Florida National Guard facilities.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget fully fund the National Guard tuition assistance program?

- Yes, the budget includes \$5.2 million to provide tuition assistance to all applicable Florida National Guardsmen pursuing higher education.

The Florida State Guard

Q: What is the Florida State Guard?

- The budget recommends the continuation of the Florida State Guard, which is a volunteer organization within the Department of Military Affairs, under the purview of the Governor, to assist in emergencies.
- Specifically, the State Guard support units related to search and recovery, medical, logistics, communications, and other support functions that are needed during responses to hurricanes, natural disasters, and other emergencies.

Q: How many soldiers are currently in the Florida State Guard?

- Currently, there are 113 soldiers in the Florida State Guard, with 560 anticipated to attend entry level training by August 2024. The Florida State Guard has received over 4,000 applications for membership and plans to conduct additional entry level training throughout the 2024-25 fiscal year for up to 500 additional soldiers for a goal of 1,200 soldiers by the end of the 2024-25 fiscal year.

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Q: How many soldiers will the Focus on Florida's Future Budget support in the Florida State Guard?

- The budget includes training and equipment resources for up to 1,500 soldiers.

Q: Why does the Florida State Guard need an additional \$57 million when the organization received over \$100 million in the current year?

- All the funding provided to date, including the positions, have been nonrecurring; therefore, a large portion of the \$57 million is to support the annual cost of current operations. This includes the operation of maritime vessels and aircraft provided in the current year, as well as the annual cost of the monthly, quarterly, and annual training and new soldier boot camp.
- The remaining funding is for additional maritime vessels, ground transportation, and other equipment needed for emergency response missions.

Q: Why does the Florida State Guard need maritime and aviation equipment?

- The Florida State Guard's role is to respond to and assist in a wide variety of emergencies, which requires a readily available and diverse fleet of equipment. The maritime and aviation resources will be especially critical during times of search and recovery, life-saving supply and resource transportation, and other response needs.

Q: Why does Florida need a State Guard and a National Guard?

- Florida is currently ranked 53 out of 54 in the ratio of service members (12,090) to population (21.4 million) as set by the federal government. For a proportional level of service members to population ratio, the Florida National Guard should have 18,000 to 21,000 service members.
- Due to the lack of service members during major disasters, the Florida National Guard has required assistance on multiple occasions from other states through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.
- The State Guard will instead augment areas of support needed during times of emergency response to reduce the reliance on other state's assistance and ensure public safety and wellbeing.

Management Services

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding for state facilities?

- Yes, the budget includes \$21 million to provide employees and visitors at state owned office buildings a safe and efficient working environment.

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- The budget also includes \$9 million to expand visitor and training capabilities at the Florida State Fire College, including the revitalization of the Fallen Firefighters Memorial grounds, the renovation of the auditorium, and the replacement of six roofs.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget proposal make changes to health benefits for state employees?

- No, the budget does not make changes to the health benefits for state employees. The budget does include a transfer of \$338.2 million from General Revenue to the State Group Health Insurance Trust Fund to cover projected needs.

Q: How much savings have been achieved through the Shared Savings Program in the State Group Health Insurance plan?

- Since 2019, Bundled Surgical Services have saved the state \$19.8 million and resulted in employee rewards in the amount of \$3.2 million.
- Since 2019, Transparency Services have saved the state \$25 million and resulted in employee rewards in the amount of \$7 million.

Q: Is the E-Rate match funding included in the Focus on Florida's Future Budget only for fiscally constrained counties like current year?

- No, all county qualifying schools and libraries are eligible for the recommended State E-Rate match program.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding to address the increasing number of cyber threats?

- Yes, the budget includes over \$100 million in various state agencies for security intelligence, modernization, training, and resiliency. While Florida has improved its cybersecurity posture in recent years, it is vital to continue to invest in modern cybersecurity initiatives to maintain pace with the ever-evolving technology landscape to ensure Floridians' sensitive information and critical infrastructure are protected.

Business and Professional Regulation

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding for the Department of Business and Professional Regulation Law Enforcement divisions?

- Yes, the budget includes nearly \$200,000 for the department to provide specialized training and equipment for sworn law enforcement officers and establishes a new recruitment program to cover the cost of law enforcement

certification training for eligible non-sworn employees seeking sworn law enforcement opportunities within the department.

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding for the Hospitality Education Program?

- Yes, the budget includes an additional \$300,000 for a total of \$1 million for school-to-career transition programs in the hospitality industry designed to foster future career opportunities for high school-aged students.

Gaming Control Commission

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding for the enforcement of illegal gambling?

- Yes, the budget includes nearly \$1.6 million for additional sworn and non-sworn positions and associated equipment in the Florida Gaming Control Commissions' Division of Gaming Enforcement to help investigate and respond to illegal gambling in Florida.

Division of Administrative Hearings

Q: Why does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include additional Administrative Law Judges?

- The budget includes an additional 18 Administrative Law Judges and 5 Judicial Assistants to address anticipated caseloads to resolve property insurance claim disputes between Citizens Property Insurance Corporation and policy holders. Citizens Property Insurance Corporation is required to cover the costs assumed by DOAH to resolve these disputes.

Lottery

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include additional resources to increase transfers to Education through Lottery ticket sales?

- The Lottery has shown a correlation between increased Lottery sales representative (SR) presence at retail locations and increased ticket sales, which increases transfers to Education; therefore, the budget includes five additional positions in the Miami-Dade region to ensure weekly retailer visits.
- The budget also includes \$712,500 to provide up to \$5,000 bonuses annually for high performing sales representatives that exceed sale projections to increase incentives and recruitment efforts.

Public Employee Relations Commission

Q: Why does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include pay increases for the Public Employee Relations Commission hearing officers?

- The budget includes \$1.3 million to increase the salaries of the Public Employee Relations Commissions' (PERC) hearing officers to \$157,000 to better recruit and retain highly qualified candidates and reduce the pay disparity between its staff and the Division of Administrative Hearings' judges, who do similar functions.

Revenue

Q: Does the Focus on Florida's Future Budget include funding for fiscally constrained counties?

- Yes, the budget includes \$72.3 million to provide twenty-nine counties with an offset to reductions in ad valorem tax revenue attributed to homestead and conservation land exemptions and includes \$900,000 to provide fifteen counties aerial photographs to ensure all real property in the county is correctly valued.