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Florida Budget (FY 2020-21): Summary by Issue Area

July 2020

On June 29, 2020, Governor Ron DeSantis signed into law the General Appropriations Act (GAA) for fiscal year (FY) 2020-21. The GAA includes $1.2 billion in line-item vetoes, for a final budget totaling $92.2 billion. While some important investments were preserved, such as teacher pay increases and conservation funding, other programs, like affordable housing, saw major cuts. Furthermore, these vetoes are a stop-gap measure, as the full extent of COVID-19's fiscal impact will not be known until the next revenue forecast is published in August 2020.

Introduction: Budget Conversations Take Sharp Turn with Rise of COVID-19

On March 6, 2020, just before the global pandemic took hold, the Florida House and Senate passed their respective budget proposals for FY 2020-21. Both chambers' budgets included some significant investments in critical areas such as education, housing, and the environment. As the legislative session ensued, however, it became increasingly clear the state was facing an unprecedented public health and economic emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, the Legislature opted to significantly reduce the amount of the tax cuts under consideration and ultimately passed the GAA on March 19, 2020, with the major funding increases intact. The GAA that was presented to Governor Ron DeSantis totaled $93.2 billion, an increase of $2.2 billion from the FY 2019-20 budget.[1]

In the months that ensued, Florida and states across the nation took steps to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Measures such as social distancing, business closures, shutting down theme parks and tourist attractions, and limiting travel took a heavy toll on the state economy. Florida's revenue collections dropped, putting those long-awaited investments in jeopardy. At the federal level, Congress responded by passing the CARES Act, which included funds for state and local governments to address the impacts of the pandemic. Florida received $8.3 billion, with $5.9 billion allocated to the state and $2.5 billion allocated to local governments.[2] However, restrictions on the use of these funds meant that they could not be used to address revenue shortfalls.

The state's fiscal conditions will continue to deteriorate, and as a result, the gap between budget appropriations and projected revenue will grow. The unemployment rate was at 14.5 percent in May 2020, while tens of thousands of new unemployment claims are filed weekly, and Florida's major employers continue announcing layoffs. General revenue collections were $1.5 billion below where they were projected to be as of May 2020. Based on these trends, the anticipated revenue gap will be significant, even after accounting for $2 billion in unallocated general revenue and $1.7 billion in the Budget Stabilization Fund.

By comparison, Florida lost $6 billion in revenue during the previous recession, which saw a peak unemployment rate of 11.3 percent.

Florida Policy Institute's (FPI's) "Roadmap to Shared Prosperity in Florida" is a blueprint for improving economic mobility, health, and fiscal stability for families in the Sunshine State,[3] principles that are important now more than ever. COVID-19 has laid bare the deep inequities at the core of Florida's economy. The state must pursue policies, including both preserving investments and raising revenue, to ensure not only a recovery from this recession, but also a stronger, more equitable economic foundation for the state's future.

FPI has analyzed each budget proposal and the final post-veto budget in the context of the roadmap.

→ Does the budget include meaningful investments in education and health that will unleash Floridians' potential and boost productivity?

The post-veto budget includes, for the first time in a decade, significant funding for increasing teacher salaries. However, the longer-term sustainability of this funding is uncertain, and 75 percent of the funding is earmarked for raising the pay floor for new teachers, leaving the pay boosts for veteran teachers in doubt.

Florida already ranked poorly across health indicators and had a high rate of uninsured residents prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and has since seen an increase in caseloads for programs such as Medicaid and KidCare. While federal COVID-19 aid will help, the final budget does not address the fiscal or health impacts of the pandemic. Florida lawmakers have yet to expand the Medicaid program, which would give more than 800,000 uninsured Floridians with low income access to care, and they have not restored a cut to Retroactive Medicaid Eligibility (RME) that went into effect in 2019. While the final budget includes an increase in funding for the Department of Health, including COVID-19 relief funding, it also includes cuts to departments that would be critical in managing the spread of COVID-19. Further, the funds appropriated are non-recurring and do not help strengthen Florida's public health infrastructure for the long term.

The final budget does not move the needle significantly on the waitlists for services for people with developmental disabilities. Florida has ranked 49th among states in funding for those with developmental disabilities for years; while the budget does include funding to help reduce waitlists, it is not nearly enough to mitigate the extraordinarily long wait times for accessing crucial long-term care services.

→ Are public infrastructure projects included in the budget to help create jobs, spur growth, promote equity, and improve climate resilience?

Investment in Florida's infrastructure — transportation, public buildings, and water treatment systems — is important, particularly now as the state faces a deep economic recession. Public infrastructure projects create jobs, increase safety during natural disasters, and help combat the impacts of climate change.[4] Right now, 9 percent of Florida's roads are in poor condition and the state's schools are 29 years old, on average.[5] In a state prone to hurricanes and floods, it's especially important to have modern, climate resilient facilities.

The type and timing of infrastructure investments, however, is crucial in determining their economic impact. The budget does not include well-planned, economically impactful infrastructure projects. However, it does continue funding for the M-CORES project — 330 miles of new toll roads that would cost hundreds of millions of dollars.[6] At a time when the state is facing a devastating revenue shortfall, this project not only siphons much-needed financial resources, it will also harm ecologically sensitive lands and do little to help rural economies.

The budget does provide funding for Everglades restoration and a significant increase for the Florida Forever program. While the commitment to Everglades restoration is a positive step, it does not come close to making up for years of deep cuts to the Florida Forever program. Additionally, local water projects were cut significantly in the governor's vetoes.

→ Does the budget include provisions that will help boost family income?

Although the Legislature had proposed full funding for the Sadowski Housing Trust Fund, the governor ultimately vetoed $225 million, sweeping these dollars into the general revenue fund for use in other areas of the budget. In its place, the governor allocated $250 million in CARES Act funding for a variety of affordable housing programs. There are, however, some important differences. The CARES Act funds must be used by the end of 2020, so it does not provide a long-term solution to Florida's affordable housing crisis.

The budget does not include any other significant measures to reduce Florida's growing income inequality, nor does it include provisions that will benefit the state's working families. In fact, the budget includes $17 million in funding *cuts* for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance program, even though benefit levels have remained stagnant for nearly three decades.

The budget also includes increased funding for inmate education, as well as transition, rehabilitation, and community substance use disorder programs — critical supports for returning citizens.

→ Does the budget contain language to clean up and modernize the tax code for a strong future?

Nearly 80 percent of Florida's revenue is generated from the sales tax, which is driven by the state's tourism industry. Business closures, layoffs, and stay-at-home orders meant that Florida's tourism and hospitality industries came to a near halt, significantly impacting the state's main revenue source. As joblessness in-state and across the nation persists, revenue continues to decline in Florida, a state with a consumer-and-tourism driven economy.

In the last days of the legislative session, the Legislature significantly scaled back the extent of the tax package that was under consideration, which had grown to $230 million. The final package totaled tax cuts of $47.7 million derived from two sales tax holidays ("back to school" and "disaster preparedness"). The Legislature did not act on proposals to stop the $543 million in corporate tax refunds that were disbursed in May.

Despite Florida's looming fiscal cliff, state leadership did not take any proactive measures to address the revenue shortage going into this fiscal year.

What Comes Next in the Budget Process?

The FY 2020-21 budget took effect on July 1, 2020. The state's Revenue Estimating Conference will meet during the summer to develop projections of the state's revenue sources. These projections are used by the Legislature to determine the revenue available to fund state budget appropriations. The next projections for Florida's general revenue fund will be issued August 14, 2020, and will be used to determine the extent of any budget deficits.

Depending on the size of the budget deficit, the Legislature may be required to hold a special session to balance the budget. In the last recession, the Legislature relied on deep budget cuts, the effects of which Floridians are still feeling today. However, there are other policy options that would both preserve funding and create a more stable revenue base for the state. Closing corporate tax loopholes, eliminating revenue-losing business subsidies, and enforcing the sales tax on online sales are just some of the ways that the state can generate more revenue and make the tax system fairer.

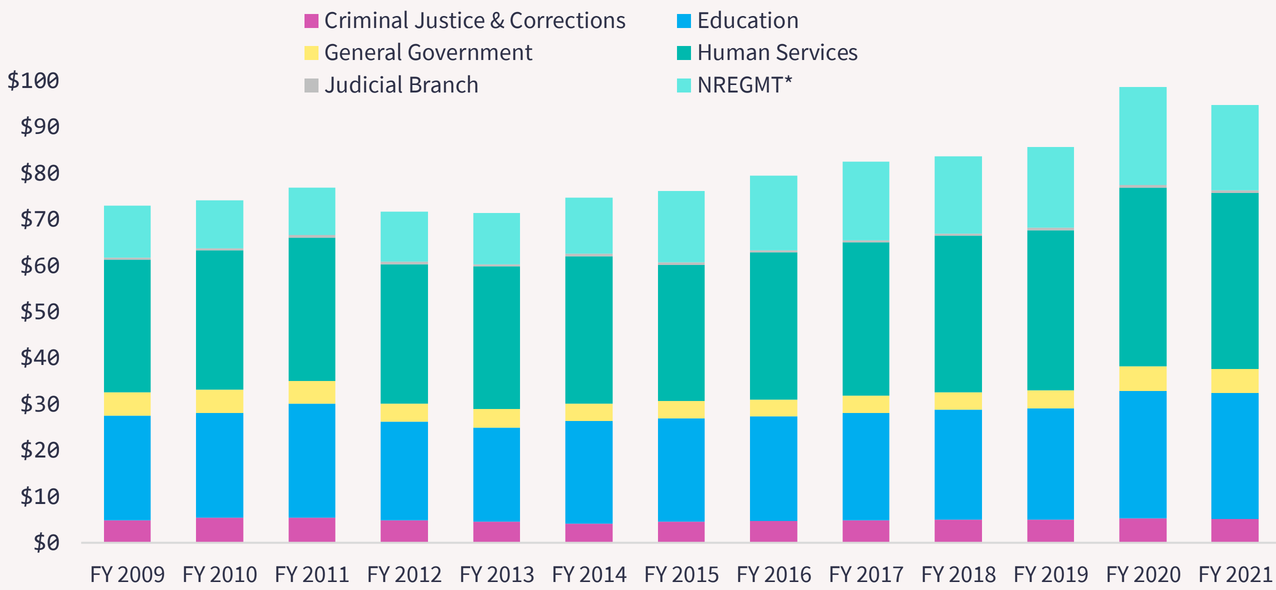
Additionally, Florida leaders must advocate for additional federal fiscal aid to help support the state budget. The $8.3 billion in funding allocated to Florida through the CARES Act's Coronavirus Relief Fund included restrictions prohibiting the state from using these dollars to directly address revenue shortfalls. Along with lifting these restrictions, Congress must provide additional, flexible aid to state and local governments as well as an increase in the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP). These measures are the most effective ways that the federal government can support states during this economic crisis. Congress is expected to take up the next aid package when it resumes session in mid-July.

Overview of the Florida State Budget

Like many states, Florida's budget has seen fluctuations over the past several years. After the Great Recession, which began in 2007 and ended in 2009, total appropriations decreased as state revenues constricted. Since then, the total budget has steadily increased. *Figure 1* shows state appropriations — factoring in vetoes and any other subsequent actions taken that impact the budget — between FY 2008-09 and the current fiscal year, broken down by the six major service areas: Education, Human Services, Criminal Justice and Corrections, Natural Resources/Environment/Growth Management/Transportation (NREGMT), General Government, and the Judicial Branch.

Figure 1. ANNUAL FLORIDA OPERATING BUDGET BY YEAR AND SERVICE AREA

Total includes general appropriations, vetoes, budget amendments, and reversions. Inflation adjusted, in billions



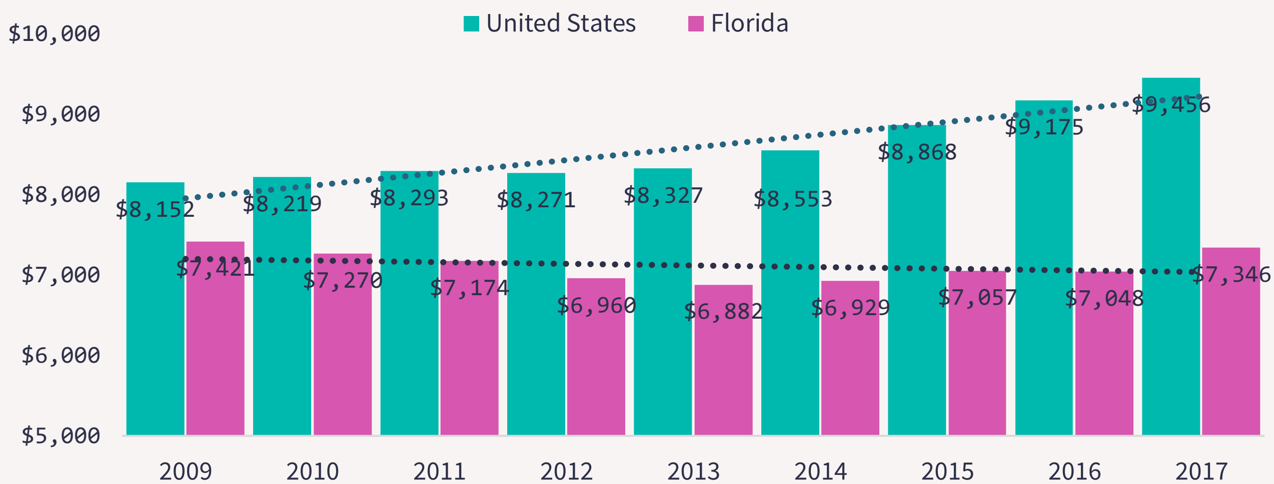
*Natural Resources/Environment/Growth Management/Transportation

While comparing year-to-year appropriations provides important insights into what direction Florida is moving in, it is even more instructive to examine investment over time that factors in the state's growing population. *Figure 2* shows that Florida lawmakers have underinvested in public services every year since the Great Recession; while other states increased their per capita spending as the economy improved, Florida went in the other direction. As a result, Florida ranks 46th among all states for its per capita investment of state and local resources in essential public services.

It is also important to note that the state budget is made up of a few different types of funds, and not all the revenue comes from state coffers. Budget appropriations are funded through the General Revenue Fund, which is where tax revenue is deposited; various state trust funds, which collect revenue specified for a particular purpose; and federal funds.

Figure 2. FLORIDA RANKS 46TH ON INVESTMENT IN PUBLIC SERVICES

Per capita state and local government expenditures, 2009-2017



Source: Tax Policy Center. State and Local Government Expenditures, Per Capita.

Additionally, budget and revenue forecasts do not take into account the foregone revenue resulting from state tax expenditures. This "shadow budget" has increased substantially since FY 2010, growing on average $780 million each year.[7] In FY 2020-21, Florida's shadow budget will cost the state $21.5 billion, a number that is likely to continue growing in the coming years.

Final FY 2020-21 Budget:

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

→ Current Landscape

Florida ranks near the bottom on multiple national rankings of health and wellness. The state has one of the highest rates of uninsured residents in the U.S., and lawmakers have failed to expand Medicaid to more than 800,000 uninsured, low-income residents. Additionally, Florida is experiencing skyrocketing growth of its most medically expensive populations: seniors and people with disabilities. These unique demographics ensure even greater future demands on the state's health care delivery system.

In terms of investment in mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) treatment, Florida lags far behind other states. Twenty percent of adults in Florida experience a mental illness.[8] The need for mental health and substance use care is expected to increase due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Adding to the pressure on Florida's already-strained community mental health system is the state's very high rate of uninsured people with mental illness. Mental Health America estimates there are 461,000 uninsured Florida adults with mental illness — the sixth highest percentage in the country.[9]

According to the Florida Department of Health, drug overdose deaths more than doubled from 2014 to 2016, with 2,175 deaths in 2014, 2,805 in 2015, and 4,672 in 2016. The state estimates that 94,000 Floridians aged 12 or older had unmet opioid treatment needs in 2015-2016. Currently, 12 Floridians are dying each day due to opioid overdoses.[10]

Home- and community-based services (HCBS) are critical in helping Florida's growing senior population stay in their homes and avoid or delay nursing home or other institutional care. Institutional care can take a mental and physical toll on individuals and their families and is more costly to the individual and taxpayers than HCBS. These services are also essential for family caregivers who need to work during the day to help support their loved ones at home. However, enormous HCBS waitlists in the tens of thousands that grow substantially year after year are keeping these services out of reach for many.

Florida has had no shortage of public health crises even before coronavirus — Zika, toxic algae blooms, Hepatitis A outbreaks, spikes in HIV infections, and the opioid crisis, to name a few. Yet, over the past decade, lawmakers have made deep cuts to public health funding, decimating state and local infrastructure intended to prevent and contain disease outbreaks. Notably, between 2010 and 2018, Florida cut county health department funding by 10 percent and health department staff shrank from 12,800 to 9,300.[11] A recent national analysis found that in Florida, only 2 percent of state spending goes to public health and funding of local health departments fell 39 percent, from a high of $57 in inflation-adjusted dollars per person in the late 1990s to $35 per person last year.[12]

Additionally, the erosion of the state's safety net leaves families who are experiencing hard times with few, if any, resources to meet their basic needs.

Florida’s Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, the state’s core safety net program for providing families with low-income a temporary means to meet basic needs, does a poor job of reaching families who have fallen on hard times. For every 100 families with income below the federal poverty level, only about 13 receive cash assistance from TANF — 42 fewer than in 1996. Adjusted for inflation, Florida’s TANF benefit levels are down more than 39 percent since 1996. Although the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which provides assistance for families to put food on the table, is an important thread in the state’s safety net, SNAP and TANF combined still put families below 46 percent of the poverty level. At the same time, the state is doing little to either address food insecurity in food deserts across the state or provide recipients of public assistance with meaningful education and training to empower them with the skills and education they need to get and keep good-paying jobs in today’s workforce.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), which provides healthy food and nutrition counseling to pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum mothers, infants and children under the age of 5 at nutritional risk, is also failing to reach many eligible families with low income. Although WIC is a cost-effective program associated with better overall health outcomes for participants who are nutritionally at risk, only 51 percent of eligible Floridians participate in WIC. More than 400,000 people in the Sunshine State who qualify for WIC are not participating.[13]

→ Budget

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES BUDGET

		FY 2020-21 Budget			
	FY 2019-20 Budget	**House**	**Senate**	**GAA**	**Final Budget (Post-Vetoes)**
Appropriation Amount	$37,657,319,245	$38,772,587,796	$39,385,755,379	$39,363,413,224	$39,223,586,984
Difference from FY 2019-20 Budget		+ $1,115,268,551	+ $1,728,436,134	+ $1,706,093,979	+ $1,566,267,739

The lion's share of the $39.2 billion Health and Human Services (HHS) budget is allocated to the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA), responsible for administering the Medicaid program. More than 70 percent of AHCA's budget is comprised of federal funding.

While this year's HHS budget is about a $1.6 million increase over last fiscal year, vital services needed to meet Florida’s growing population of seniors, people with disabilities, and children continue to be seriously underfunded, even more so during COVID-19. Notably, this year's budget appropriates $68.9 million toward the “Medicaid Contingency Reserve.” AHCA is authorized to submit budget amendments to request release of these funds. Release is contingent upon AHCA providing sufficient justification to the governor, Speaker of the House and President of the Senate.

Budget items of particular concern include: the continuing policy choice not expand the Medicaid program, even though it is projected to save millions of state dollars; failure to restore retroactive Medicaid eligibility;

lack of funding to reduce the Medicaid Long Term Care program waitlist; and lack of much-needed long term investments in public health services.

Medicaid Caseload

The budget fully funds the 3.8 million Medicaid caseloads projected for FY 2020-21. However, those projections were made prior to the pandemic. Since February 2020, the family-related Medicaid caseload alone has increased by more than 215,000 (as of June 2, 2020). However, federal COVID-19 relief provides a 6.2 percentage point increase in the federal matching rate, which helps boost the Medicaid budget. This relief extends through the duration of the public health emergency and covers claims back to the first quarter of 2020.[14] For the next round of federal relief funding, the National Governors Association, the National Conference of State Legislators, the Florida Medical Association, and multiple other provider and advocacy groups from across the country[15] are urging Congress to increase the federal match by at least 12 percentage points until the national unemployment rate falls below 5 percent. The letter specifically notes that “Florida’s state Medicaid program grew by nearly 8 percent between February and May and it is estimated this could blow a $1 billion hole in the state’s budget for the 2020-2021 fiscal year, which began July 1.”

KidCare

The budget fully funds the projected caseloads in the KidCare programs — Florida Healthy Kids, MediKids, and Children's Medical Services. Projections, however, were based on enrollment prior to the pandemic. At that time, the average monthly caseload was about 272,000. Enrollment in these programs has declined by more than 11,000 as of May 1, 2020[16], presumably due to job loss and families having financial difficulties paying premiums.

Senate Bill 348, which the governor signed into law, repeals the $1 million lifetime benefit maximum on covered expenses for children enrolled in the Florida Healthy Kids program. According to a staff analysis the bill has an estimated fiscal impact of $1.17 million to the Healthy Kids program.[17] Of this amount, $281,000 is general revenue, and $892,000 million is federal funding.

Retroactive Medicaid

The budget continues the $104 million cut eliminating the retroactive Medicaid benefit for all beneficiaries except pregnant women and children. This means the loss of $63.5 million in federal funds. HB 5003, the appropriations implementing bill, extends this cut through June 30, 2021. By March 1, 2021, AHCA is required to submit a report to the governor and Legislature on the impact of this change on beneficiaries and providers.

Notably, seniors and adults with disabilities are disproportionately hurt by this cut. Without retroactive Medicaid benefits, thousands of people will face enormous medical debt arising from unanticipated, catastrophic illnesses or injuries that require hospitalization or end-of-life nursing home care.[18]

Hospital Medicaid Reimbursement

The budget maintains the $1.5 billion appropriation from FY 2019-20, including $925 million of federal funding for the Low-Income Pool (LIP). LIP provides supplemental funding for mainly uncompensated hospital care costs. The required state match is raised by local governmental entities such as counties and hospital taxing districts (called "intergovernmental transfers," or IGTs). The state has not been able to access the entire $1.5 billion allotment because the full state match portion has not been raised. For FY 2019-20, just $335,000 was raised out of a total of $575,000 needed in order to draw down all of the appropriated federal funds.[19]

In addition, the budget implementing bill (HB 5003) includes further restrictions on access to LIP funding. It requires "essential providers" to contract with all Medicaid managed care plans. This would affect some of the largest hospitals in the state and could eliminate some hospitals from accessing LIP funds, which in turn could jeopardize local governments' capacities to raise the state match through IGTs.

Medicaid Institutional Care

The governor vetoed $38.3 million for increased provider rates for institutions serving people with intellectual disabilities and severe behavioral needs. (It is worth noting that both the House and Senate had included funding for the increased rate in their respective budgets.) However, the budget *does* include a $105 million Medicaid funding increase for nursing home providers.

Community Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services

The budget includes $838 million for community mental health services. This is an increase of about $3.8 million from the previous fiscal year despite the governor's vetoing of funding for multiple special projects. The community mental health budget also includes time-limited federal dollars under the State Opioid Response Grant, funding medication assisted treatment (MAT) and recovery support services. When dollars are exhausted under this federal grant, it will create a "funding cliff" unless state funds are appropriated to continue the increased service capacity.

The HHS budget also includes a $4 million increase for students to access mental health services in schools through telehealth. Additionally, there is a $100 million appropriation in the education budget for school-based mental health services.

Home- and Community-Based Services (HCBS)

HCBS for Persons with Disabilities

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) provides a wide array of medical, social, behavioral, and residential services to individuals whose daily life is severely hindered by a developmental disability that was present before adulthood.

The budget includes an increase of $30.2 million, which is projected to serve an additional 640 individuals on the APD waitlist. As of February 2019, there were 22,865 individuals on the waitlist.[20] While this funding is a step in the right direction, it will only cover 2.7 percent of the individuals waiting for services. For years, Florida has ranked 49th among states in funding for people with developmental disabilities.[21] The budget for APD also includes $215.5 million to fund deficits for FY 2018-19 and 2019-20.

HCBS for Seniors

Several key Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA) programs provide targeted support to at-risk older adults and their families, helping individuals stay in their homes and avoid institutional care. Three of note are the Alzheimer's Disease Initiative (ADI), Community Care for the Elderly (CCE), and Home Care for the Elderly (HCE) programs.

Additional funding in the budget only marginally reduces the waitlists for these programs, which have left hundreds of thousands of Floridians languishing without care for years. Investing more in these programs now can help offset taxpayer costs in the long-term. As people spend down what little savings they have while on the waitlists for these services, their assets will become low enough to qualify for Medicaid — at a life stage when health care is the most expensive. Legislators concerned about Medicaid spending and costly institutional care should prioritize investing in these preventative HCBS programs.

- ADI provides respite and support services to family caregivers of individuals living with Alzheimer's disease and similar cognitive disorders. The budget provides an increase of $2.8 million which, is projected to serve 240 more individuals on the waitlist. As of May 2020, there were 6,940 individuals on the ADI waitlist.[22] The additional funding will cover just 3 percent of the waitlist.

- CCE provides a continuum of care (e.g. case management, personal care, homemaking, adult day care) to functionally impaired seniors, especially those referred to Adult Protective Services for risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. The budget provides an increase of $4.2 million, which is projected to serve 498 more of the highest risk seniors on the waitlist, which currently sits at a staggering 49,572 individuals.[23] This covers just 1 percent of the people waiting for these services.

- HCE provides subsidies to individuals caring for a senior in a private home setting. An increase of $600,000 is projected to serve 146 more of the highest risk seniors on the HCE waitlist, which currently sits at 10,324 individuals.[24] This increase will cover services for just 1 percent of the waitlist).

The budget does not include any additional funds to serve more people through the Statewide Medicaid Managed Care Long Term Care (SMMC LTC) program. This program provides the most robust package of benefits, enabling people to stay out of nursing facilities and stay in their homes instead. It also has the largest waitlist, with 59, 417 Floridians as of May 2020.[25] Notably, for every dollar the state spends on SMMC LTC, it receives $1.56 in federal reimbursement. Plus, for the duration of the public health emergency, the state is receiving an even higher federal match.

HCBS WAITLISTS

		Number of People Served with Increased Funding in Proposed Budgets			
Type of HCBS	**Size of Waitlist***	**Governor**	**House**	**Senate**	**Final Budget (Post-Vetoes)**
Alzheimer's Disease Initiative	6,940	257	310	158	240
Community Care for the Elderly Program	49,572	594	416	382	499
Home Care for the Elderly Program	10,324	243	243	146	146

* Waitlist numbers accessed via the Florida Council on Aging. Estimates for how many additional people would be served under House and Senate proposals are based on the House's estimated cost of $8,418 per individual for CCE; $4,119 per individual for HCE and $11,654 per individual for the Alzheimer's Disease Initiative.

These waiting list numbers may substantially change in the future due to CS/HB 1373 being signed into law. Current waitlists include all seniors/persons with disabilities who have been screened by the appropriate Aging and Disabilities Resource Center and determined to be in need of services. Based on the screening, the individual receives a priority score, which indicates the level of need for services and reflects the level of the individual's frailty. Using the priority score, the individual is then placed on the waitlist.

The new law requires the DOEA to continue placing individuals with high priority scores on the waitlist. However, it provides the DOEA discretion on whether to add individuals with low priority scores to the waitlist.

Medicaid Expansion

The budget fails to include expansion of Florida's Medicaid program, which could benefit more than 800,000 uninsured adult Floridians with low income and save lives.[26] Moreover, there is a large and growing body of research that shows Medicaid expansion will save state dollars and provide state budget fiscal gains well beyond the cost of expansion.[27]

Public Health Funding

There was an overall DOH budget increase of $40.2 million, including a $16.1 million increase for county health departments and local needs. However, there is a $7.2 million decrease in the Disease Control and Health Protection budget, which funds the Bureaus of Epidemiology, Communicable Diseases, Environmental Health, and Public Health Laboratories.

The budget also includes an additional $52.4 million in COVID-19 federal relief dollars appropriated for the previous fiscal year, which ran from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020. Funds that were unexpended after June 30, 2020, roll over into the current (FY 2020-21) budget.

After approval of the FY 2020-21 budget, a budget amendment was approved on July 7, 2020, giving DOH authority to provide an additional $138 million in federal COVID-19 relief funding to county health departments. These funds will be used to hire epidemiologists, nurses, and contact tracers.[28]

Notably, these are non-recurring funds tied to the current pandemic. They do not provide long term investments to shore up Florida's public health workforce and infrastructure, which have been decimated over the past decade.

Veterans and the Military

The budget funds the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), which assists veterans in accessing benefits and operates long-term care facilities for veterans in Florida, at $115 million, about $17 million more than the previous fiscal year. This reflects $1.6 million in vetoes, including $200,000 for the Transition House's Homeless Veterans Program and $400,000 for K9 Partners for Patriots, which provides service dogs to veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, and military sexual trauma. Among the projects funded in the budget are $6 million in additions and improvements to veterans' homes and $2.6 million for contract projects serving veterans, such as the Florida Veteran Helpline.

The final budget appropriates $71.7 million for the Department of Military Affairs (DMA), up $5 million from the previous fiscal year. As part of DMA's appropriation, the Legislature funds the National Guard Tuition Assistance (NGTA) program[29] at just over $4 million, which is about $500,000 more than the current funding level. NGTA assists National Guard members who are seeking undergraduate or certain postgraduate degrees.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Despite families' growing need for temporary help to get back on their feet after losing jobs in the pandemic, Florida's budget includes a reduction in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance funding to $115 million, which is $17 million less than the previous year's appropriation. TANF cash assistance was funded at $132 million in FY 2019-20, an amount that was already inadequate to meet the basic needs of children in families with low income. It is past time for Florida to raise benefit levels instead of cutting the program, particularly in light of increased need for financial assistance due to COVID-19.

TANF helps families with very-low income make ends meet by providing them cash assistance to pay for subsistence needs like toothpaste, diapers, rent, and utilities. While the Department of Children and Families (DCF) included a reduction in TANF as a potential cut in its annual "Priority Listing of Agency Budget Issues for Possible Reduction in the Event of Revenue Shortfalls for Legislative Budget Request Year" exercise for FY 2020-21,[30] DCF itself cautions against implementing the cut because of the adverse impact on critical safety net programs and services, which are already operating at capacity.

Florida has kept TANF payments at the same level for almost three decades. The maximum TANF benefit for families in Florida — $303/month for a family of three — is only about 17 percent of the poverty level,[31] which is not enough for families to get by on. Inflation has eroded this payment value by almost 40 percent.[32] In fact, TANF benefit levels in the Sunshine State are about 25.5 percent of fair market rents, and even if a family receives both SNAP and TANF, those benefits combined keep the family under 46 percent of the poverty level.[33]

Florida's TANF program, because of its stagnant cash assistance levels, is not fulfilling its intended purpose of promoting economic self-sufficiency and providing families the temporary help they need in hard times to keep their children out of foster care.

The budget also does not include adequate investment in meaningful supports for TANF recipients to improve their education or build skills for stable employment. In the TANF program, most recipients who do not have a disability are required to participate in the TANF Employment and Training (E&T) program as a condition of eligibility unless they have a good reason to be excused. Nonetheless, many Floridians in TANF E&T either do not get the targeted education and training necessary to boost their employability or they lose their assistance when significant obstacles, such as health problems or lack of child care and transportation, keep them from being able to follow through.[34] The program should provide robust work supports targeted to the needs of the individual family instead of terminating cash assistance when barriers are insurmountable or subjecting participants to cookie-cutter E&T assignments.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Although the budget does not expressly call for the reduction in transportation expense funding for SNAP recipients in the E&T program that Governor DeSantis recommended in his proposed budget, it does not provide for any needed increase in that funding, either.

To receive SNAP in Florida, most recipients who do not have a disability or are not raising minor children are required to work or participate in the E&T program, which is intended to help recipients gain the skills they need to get and keep a job. If E&T participants need help with transportation, Florida provides up to $25 monthly. This amount is insufficient for many of the SNAP recipients who travel back and forth to work or training. Thousands of recipients lose their SNAP as a sanction when barriers such as lack of access to transportation prevent them from participating in E&T. In 2016, as many as 58 percent of SNAP recipients — 360,000 people — who were referred to E&T in Florida lost their assistance due to nonparticipation in SNAP E&T. Notably, transportation was their biggest barrier.[35]

The impact on recipients who either cannot participate in E&T due to high transportation costs or lose their SNAP as an E&T sanction due to lack of transportation is significant: they will have no way to put food on the table for their families and no opportunity to take part in E&T. Florida lawmakers should raise the $25 cap on transportation services so that all SNAP recipients have the chance for E&T.

The budget also does not allocate the $2 million recommended by Governor DeSantis [36] for a pilot program in Osceola and Orange counties to implement a SNAP E&T third party partnerships pilot project to provide job-driven training for SNAP participants who need additional skills, training, or work experience necessary for economic self-sufficiency. In third party partnerships, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) reimburses 50 percent of the cost for services that partners provide to SNAP recipients, which maximizes federal funding for much needed skills-focused training for decent jobs that pay a living wage in today's labor market.

Final FY 2020-21 Budget:

PUBLIC SAFETY & CORRECTIONS

→ Current Landscape

Florida's Department of Corrections (DOC) is the third largest state prison system in the country. In fact, Florida's incarceration rate is higher than all of the 13 founding NATO countries: USA, Canada, and the 11 European countries. Since 1996, the number of people serving 10 or more years has tripled. As a result, the state has not been able to properly respond to the costs and needs associated with its incarcerated population. Inmates' health costs have significantly increased, which caused the department to experience a major budget deficit in FY 2018-19.

→ Budget

PUBLIC SAFETY & CORRECTIONS BUDGET

		FY 2020-21 Budget			
	FY 2019-20 Budget	**House**	**Senate**	**GAA**	**Final Budget (Post-Vetoes)**
Appropriation Amount	$4,860,052,250	$4,931,097,776	$4,961,841,187	$4,963,213,414	$4,918,224,703
Difference from FY 2019-20 Budget		+ $71,045,526	+ $101,788,937	+ $103,161,164	+ $58,172,453

Department of Corrections

The budget allocates $2.76 billion to the Department of Corrections (DOC), a roughly 2 percent increase over the previous fiscal year. While the slight bump in the department's budget is insufficient given the financial woes it has been experiencing, it is worthwhile to highlight that the governor's final allocations largely followed the recommendations of the House and Senate, and did not cut funds for critical programs in light of the state's revenue shortfalls due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The budget addresses a few of the most critical issues DOC facilities have been experiencing for the past decade, which are understaffing, health care, and a shortage of educational teachers. A significant portion of DOC's budget over the last two fiscal years has gone toward funding for treatment of Hepatitis C and mental health, as well as compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act as ordered by a court mandate. As a result, key re-entry programs were underfunded.

Education

The budget provides a total of $37.8 million for basic education skills, which is $4.8 million more than the previous fiscal year. This increase is important because hiring and retaining quality teachers has been a persistent issue for the department, and in the past few years, some facilities did not have even one teacher. Part of this funding will help to create 17 positions for academic education and 17 for wellness specialists. Further, $750,000 was given to DOC to contract with the Florida Virtual School to offer an online education program. The budget includes $1 million to CareerSource Florida to develop and implement a vocational curriculum for those who are incarcerated.

Maintenance and Repairs

The budget includes $189 million for maintenance and repair projects at correctional facilities, a small decrease from FY 2019-20 funding levels. Out the $189 million, $12.3 million is set aside for constructing and equipping Lake Correctional Institution Mental Health Facility for 600 beds, a priority the governor had emphasized in his budget recommendations. Moreover, $6 million and $5.9 million were allocated for much-needed renovations for correctional institutions and mental health facilities, respectively.

Health Care

The budget includes $567 million for inmate health care services, an increase of just $153,000 over the previous fiscal year. The Legislature provided $595 million; however, the governor vetoed $28 million for Hepatitis C treatment for individuals who have been diagnosed and are at level F0-F1 or the early stage of their diagnosis. This is due to the state's ongoing court appeal that seeks to challenge an existing court mandate that requires treatment for all inmates who have been diagnosed with Hepatitis C, regardless of the stage of their diagnosis.

Operations

The budget includes $822 million for operations. Part of this funding will go toward implementing a new retention step plan proposed by DOC's Secretary for correctional officers, correctional probation officers, and inspectors. The budget appropriates $587 million specifically to help launch a pilot project that would convert correctional officers' 12-hour shifts to 8.5-hour shifts.

Re-entry, Community Substance Abuse Prevention, and Supervision

The budget includes $12.6 million for transition and rehabilitation programs and $26 million for community SUD programs. The budget also allows funding for DOC to develop a court liaison pilot program at two community drug treatment provider sites. Community supervision receives $227 million, a $13 million increase over FY 2019-20.

Department of Juvenile Justice

The budget provides $579 million for the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), which is significantly less — a f $13 million reduction — from the previous fiscal year.

The budget allocates $91.1 million to community supervision, a 3 percent decrease from the funding level in the previous fiscal year. This includes $4 million specifically to provide alternative programs to youth who are at risk of commitment. The budget cut funding for detention centers by $1.9 million, roughly 1.6 percent less than the FY 2019-20 budget.

Non-secured residential commitment programs received $121.7 million, a $4.6 million cut from this past fiscal year. To address the department's high turn-over rate, the Legislature allocated $2 million for retention bonuses for employees, but this was ultimately vetoed by the governor.

The final budget slashed $6.1 million from delinquency prevention and diversion programs, which yields a total allocation of $86.7 million. Diversion programs have been effective as an alternative to juvenile arrests. They provide innovative and hands-on approaches to help divert at-risk kids from delinquent behavior. Additionally, diversion programs offer great fiscal benefits for the state in the long run. A funding cut to these programs would have a sizable impact on communities across the state.

Final FY 2020-21 Budget:

EDUCATION

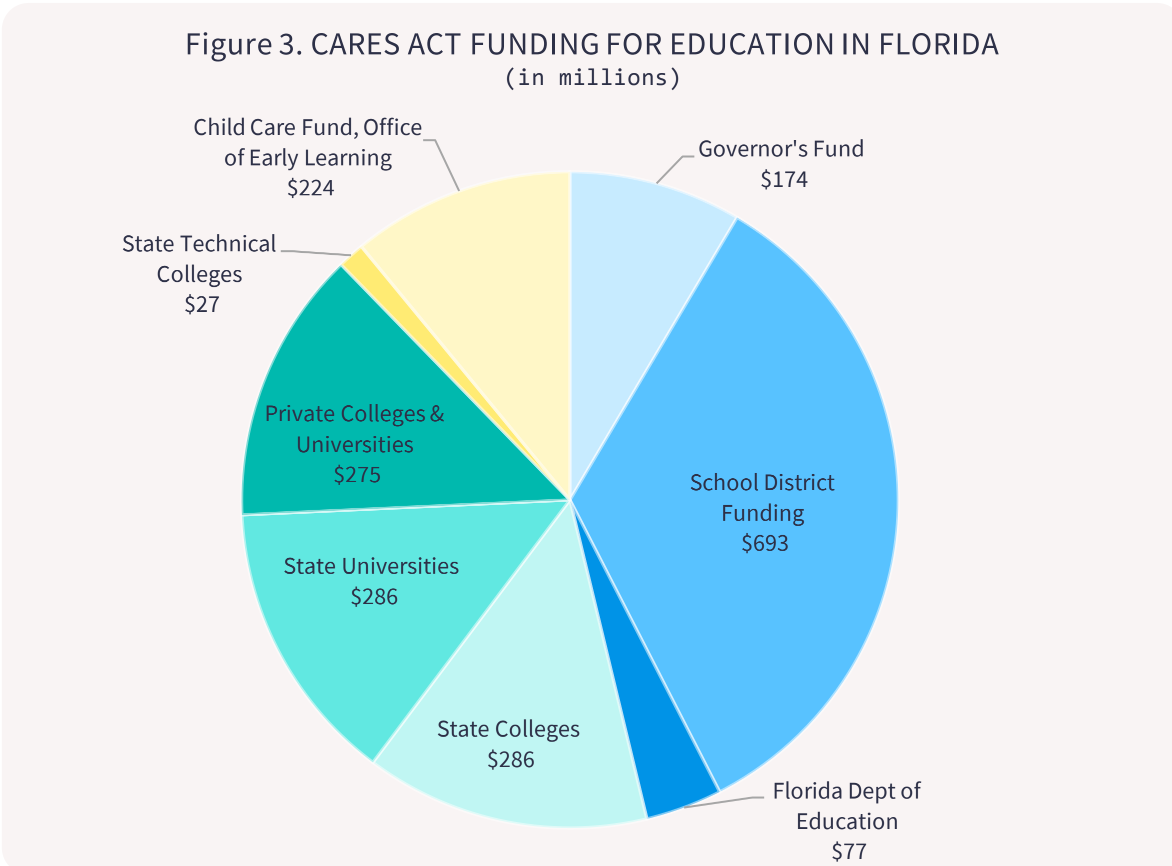
EDUCATION BUDGET					
		FY 2020-21 Budget			
	FY 2019-20 Budget	**House**	**Senate**	**GAA**	**Final Budget (Post-Vetoes)**
Appropriation Amount	$26,014,741,729	$26,613,693,908	$26,767,475,475	$27,042,687,877	$26,747,188,967
Difference from FY 2019-20 Budget		+ $598,952,179	+ $752,733,746	+ $1,027,946,148	+ $732,447,238

→ Current Landscape

After Governor DeSantis vetoed $295.5 million in education spending, Florida's total education budget still grew by $732 million over the previous fiscal year. However, many education proponents and local leaders, pointing to the twin pressures of the COVID-19 crisis and population growth, contend the funding is far from enough. The COVID-19 pandemic caused childcare centers, schools, colleges, and universities across the state to close their doors and move online. At the very time that schools need extra resources to provide a healthy environment, the revenues that propel education in the state have steeply declined.

In March 2020, Congress passed the CARES Act, which earmarked $30.75 billion to K-12 and higher education systems in the Education Stabilization Fund, of which Florida received $2.04 billion. More than a third of these Florida funds —$693 million — went directly to school districts to help with a range of COVID-19 response related expenses. Higher education institutions in the state directly received $874 million, half of which was required to go directly to students. DeSantis has broad discretion to spend the remaining $475 million. Of the $224 million earmarked for childcare support, his office earmarked $86 million to go to safety net reserves and $136 million to support childcare centers, support childcare for first responders and health care workers, and ensure that no parents lost their school readiness subsidies during the crisis. The governor is aiming the remaining $251 million mostly at supports to reduce the "achievement gap" by funding reading coaches, reading and civics curriculum, and data collection. The governor also has earmarked $35 million toward short-term industry certificate programs and $2.5 million toward a "Job Market Dashboard."

Education Stabilization Funds were not included in the FY 2020-21 budget passed by Legislature in March. While the initial funding boost is helpful, many school leaders are sounding the alarm that more federal support for schools is critical. On April 28, 2020, the superintendents of Broward, Orange, Miami Dade, Duval, Palm Beach, and Pinellas school districts joined a letter sent to Congress calling for $175 billion more in education stabilization funds.[37]



EARLY CHILDHOOD AND PRE-K-12 EDUCATION

→ Current Landscape

Florida voters passed a constitutional amendment in 2002 that mandated the state provide free, quality, universal voluntary pre-Kindergarten (VPK). The program pays for three hours of educational programming a day to four- and five-year-old children. There is no income eligibility; in fact, 77 percent of eligible four-year-old children in the state attend VPK, one of the highest participation rates in the country. However, many families find themselves struggling to pay for the remainder of each day's services. Florida's per student VPK spending ranks 41st out of the 43 states that offer free VPK. Three hours a day is hardly enough for robust, quality education for children.

Florida's School Readiness Program offers financial assistance to low-income families for early education so parents can work and their children will be prepared for school. The majority of funding comes from the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). The program is available to families with income below 150 percent of the federal poverty level, and most counties have waiting lists for participation.

→ Budget

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK)

VOLUNTARY PRE-KINDERGARTEN BUDGET

		FY 2020-21 Budget			
	FY 2019-20 Budget	**House**	**Senate**	**GAA**	**Final Budget (Post-Vetoes)**
Appropriation Amount	$402,280,371	$412,750,785	$404,033,453	$412,158,049	$412,158,049
Difference from Current Year Budget		+ $10,470,414	+ $1,753,082	+$9,877,678	+$9,877,678
VPK Per-Pupil School Year Funding	$2,437	$2,486	$2,437	$2,486	$2,486
Difference from Current Year Per-Pupil School Year Funding		+ $49	$0	+$49	+$49

The budget includes enough funding for an increase of $49 per pupil. The VPK Estimating Conference, which met in January 2020, predicted that VPK enrollment would fall slightly by 1,140. However, even with the base allocation increase of $49, it is still below the base student allocation in FY 2005-06, the first year of the program. Moreover, if the base allocation had kept up with inflation, it would have amounted to $3,293 today.

School Readiness Program

SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM BUDGET

		FY 2020-21 Budget			
	FY 2019-20 Budget	**House**	**Senate**	**GAA**	**Final Budget (Post Veto)**
Appropriation Amount	$760,877,228	$760,877,228	$760,877,228	$895,877,228	$895,877,228
Difference from Current Year Budget		$0	$0	+$135,000,000	+$135,000,000

The final budget boosts funding levels for the School Readiness Program by $135 million. Between FY 2018-19 and FY 2020-21, funding for this program increased by $205 million through federal funding increases of the CCDBG. This was a welcome infusion for childcare advocates, who have drawn attention to the program's long waiting lists and uneven provider quality. Of the total, $60 million will go explicitly towards reducing wait lists for child readiness dollars.

For the School Readiness Program, the budget includes a new carve-out of $30 million in matching funds for local programs that expand eligibility up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level, as long as income does not exceed 85 percent of the state median income. Additionally, the Office of Early Learning received $224 million from the CARES Act Education Stabilization Fund toward childcare supports in response to the COVID-19 crisis, above and beyond the current year budget.

K-12 EDUCATION

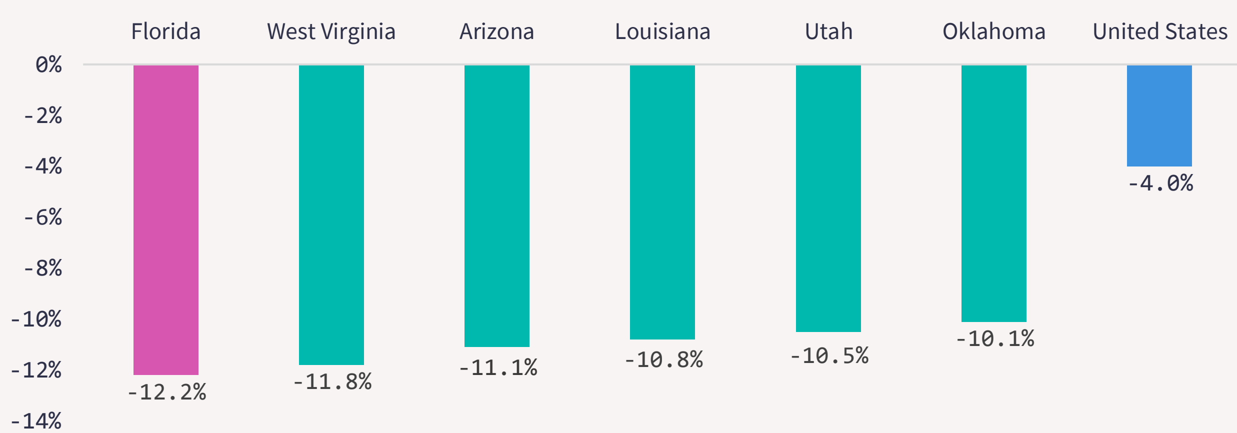
→ Current Landscape

Providing a quality education to all of Florida's students is a core constitutional responsibility of state government and critical to economic growth. Adequate state funding for education provides the foundation for students to compete in an ever-changing economy, and it helps to attract highly qualified teachers and maintain the equity and fairness of Florida's education system.

In the wake of the Great Recession, many states cut education funding dramatically after state and local revenues plummeted. While many states rebounded in the years that followed, Florida's investment per-pupil was cut to 22.7 percent beneath pre-recession levels, after adjusting for inflation. Now, as Florida and the nation battle a pandemic, state revenues have plummeted and once again education budgets are threatened with looming drastic cuts. State and local combined funds for Florida's primary and secondary (PreK-12) education dropped $2,767 per pupil from 2008 to 2016, inflation adjusted.[38] This funding shortage has significantly suppressed teacher salaries — Florida's average teacher pay currently ranked 47th in the nation in 2019.[39] Florida cut teacher pay more than any other state from 2009 to 2018. (See *Figure 4*.)

Figure 4. FLORIDA CUTS TO AVERAGE TEACHER PAY HIGHEST SINCE GREAT RECESSION

Percent change in state average K-12 teacher pay, inflation adjusted, FY 2009-2018



Source: "Ranking of the States 2017 and Estimates of School Statistics 2018," NEA Research, National Education Association, April 2018.

→ Budget

K-12 EDUCATION BUDGET

		FY 2020-21 Budget			
	FY 2019-20 Budget	**House**	**Senate**	**GAA**	**Final Budget (Post-Vetoes)**
K-12 Total State Funding – FEFP	$12,450,345,660	$13,087,360,203	$12,980,459,216	$12,994,172,946	$12,859,590,069
K-12 Total State Funding – Non-FEFP	$426,511,969	$352,828,996	$401,811,214	$439,025,150	$404,894,757
K-12 Total Local Funding	$9,398,184,607	$9,663,218,892	$9,664,141,523	$9,663,594,905	$9,663,594,905
K-12 per-pupil spending	$7,672	$7,874	$7,837	$7,840	n/a
K-12 base student allocation	$4,279	$4,329	$4,320	$4,319	$4,319

K-12 SELECT PROGRAMS

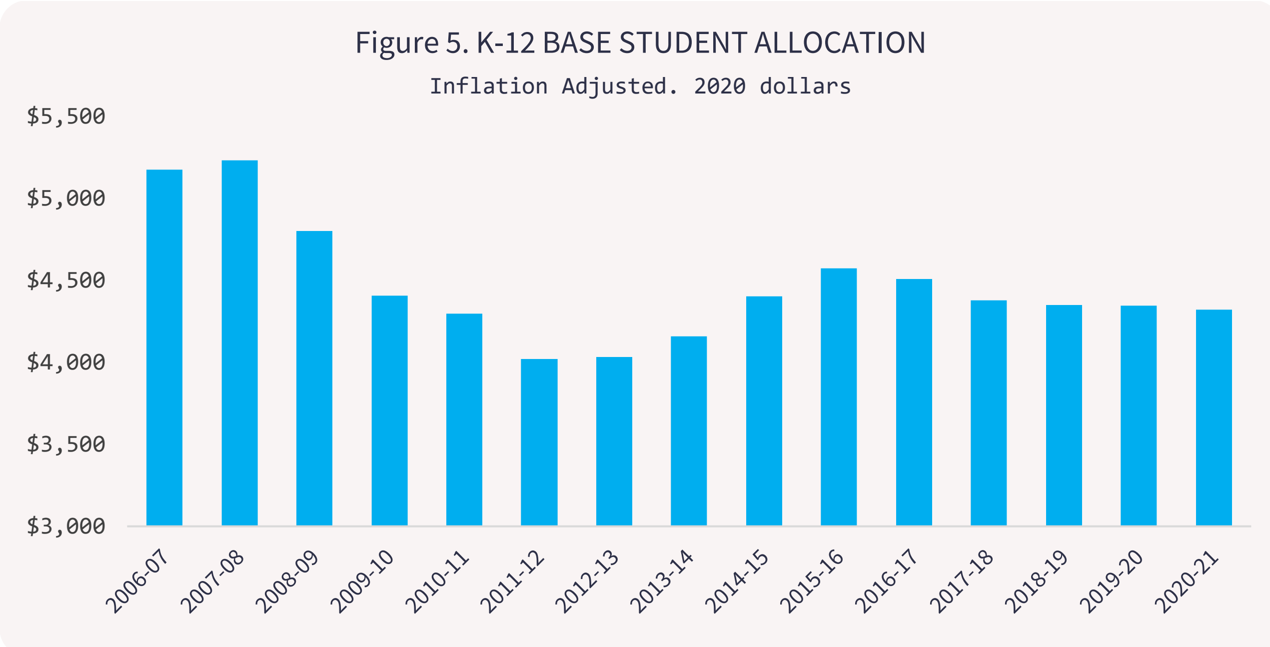
		FY 2020-21 Budget			
	FY 2019-20 Budget	**House**	**Senate**	**GAA**	**Final Budget (Post-Veto)**
K-12 Best and Brightest Teacher Bonuses	$284,500,000	$0	$0	$0	$0
Florida Classroom Teacher Compensation Program	N/A	$650,000,000	$500,000,000	$500,000,000	$500,000,000
K-12 Mental Health Assistance Allocation	$75,000,000	$100,000,000	$100,000,000	$100,000,000	$100,000,000

The FY 2020-21 budget:

- **Funds the state's portion of the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) at $12.9 billion for K-12 public education — an increase of 3.3 percent over current-year funding.** This includes a $40 increase in the base student allocation (BSA), the most flexible spending for schools and best measure for comparing year-to-year K-12 funding.

  State funding for education comes from the General Revenue Fund (sales and other taxes), the Educational Enhancement Trust Fund (lottery proceeds), and other trust funds. In nominal dollars,

$4,319 in BSA funding would be the highest on record in Florida. However, when adjusted for inflation, the BSA for FY 2007-08 would equal $5,233 in today's dollars (see Figure 5). Florida's spending on K-12 education has yet to rebound to its pre-recession level and will be under enormous pressure from the current economic crisis.



- **Dedicates $500 million to increasing teacher pay.** For the first time in more than decade, the budget includes significant funding for teacher salary increases instead of bonus programs. The budget eliminates teacher bonus programs and instead dedicates $500 million towards salary enhancements aimed at increasing the minimum base pay for teachers and other full-time instructional personnel, including certified prekindergarten teachers, to at least $47,500. Each district would be able to use 20 percent of their share of the appropriation for raising overall pay, to include veteran teachers. The budget prioritizes classroom teachers; districts could only use the funds to increase pay for other staff, such as literacy coaches and guidance counselors, after sufficient entry-level salaries were achieved for teachers.

- **Includes an increase in local funding from property tax revenue of $159 million.** The increase reflects rising property values; however, the proposals reduce the millage (property tax) rate instead of keeping the rate constant and capturing the resulting funding increases, and so the $159 million only includes the additional property tax revenue from new construction.

- **Funds Mental Health Assistance at $100 million, an increase of $25 million.** These funds would go toward mental health services provided at K-12 schools. Notably, schools would be able to use a portion of this funding to draw down additional federal Medicaid match funding, thanks to a new law signed by Gov. DeSantis in June.

HIGHER EDUCATION

→ Current Landscape

Researchers have found that the more educated a state's populace is, the higher the median wage.[40] This makes sense on an individual level: in Florida, the median wage for someone with a bachelor's degree ($66,301) was roughly 2.4 times that of someone with a high school diploma alone ($27,522) in 2017.[41] It also makes sense at a community-level: the larger the supply of highly-skilled workers, the more attractive the community is to high-wage employers.[42]

In Florida, higher education funding per student in 2018 was 13.5 percent below what it was in 2008, when adjusted for inflation.[43]

→ Budget

Florida College System

FLORIDA COLLEGE SYSTEM BUDGET

		FY 2020-21 Budget			
	FY 2019-20 Budget	**House**	**Senate**	**GAA**	**Final Budget (Post-Vetoes)**
Total State Support	$1,255,757,765	$1,277,714,158	$1,288,683,265	$1,289,948,414	$1,277,942,716

The budget increases overall funding for the Florida College System (FCS) by $22 million, for a total of $1.28 billion. This represents a 2 percent increase in state support for Florida's colleges over the current funding level. A recent TaxWatch report found that the FCS is a great investment for the state, students, and the economy, infusing $9 into the economy for every dollar spent on FCS.[44]

State University System

STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM BUDGET

		FY 2020-21 Budget			
	FY 2019-20 Budget	**House**	**Senate**	**GAA**	**Final Budget (Post-Vetoes)**
State University System (SUS) – State Funding Support	$3,155,832,501	$3,140,100,099	$3,215,226,722	$3,284,016,719	$3,214,366,610

State University System – Funding from Tuition and Fees	$1,957,486,926	$1,957,486,926	$1,957,486,926	$1,957,486,926	$1,957,486,926
Total SUS Funding	$5,113,319,427	$5,068,082,515	$5,211,256,952	$5,241,503,645	$5,177,037,061

The budget provides $3.21 billion in state support for university operating expenses. This represents a 2 percent increase compared to the previous funding level. Despite this marginal increase, general revenue support for the State University System has yet to rebound to pre-recession levels. (See *Figure 6.*) The final budget also keeps tuition and fees constant.

Student Financial Aid

STUDENT FINANCIAL AID BUDGET

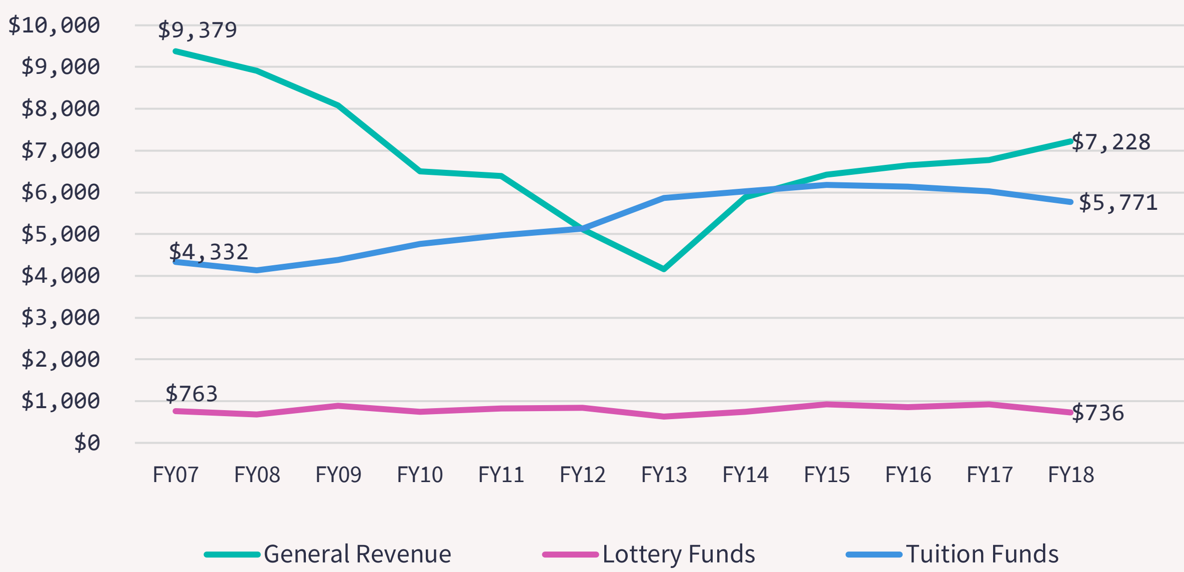
		FY 2020-21 Budget Proposals			
	FY 2019-20 Budget	**House**	**Senate**	**GAA**	**Final Budget (Post-Vetoes)**
Bright Futures (Merit-based scholarships)	$595,143,167	$651,776,770	$651,776,770	$651,776,770	$651,776,770
Student Financial Aid (Need-based aid)	$280,398,215	$280,921,887	$281,155,257	$280,921,887	$280,921,887
Other Aid (Specialty scholarships, matches, and loans)	$46,356,041	$51,560,795	$51,560,795	$52,060,795	$52,060,795
Total Student Financial Aid	$921,897,423	$984,259,452	$984,492,822	$984,759,452	$984,759,452

The budget increases the total student financial aid budget by $63 million, for a total of $984.8 million. While need-based financial aid funding is increased by roughly a half million dollars over the current-year budget, the majority of the financial aid budget increase is due to an additional $56.6 million for the merit-based Bright Futures Scholarship Program. This boost is due to an increase in the projected number of Bright Futures awards for the current fiscal year; in December 2019, the Education Estimating Conference released its projection that the number of expected awards had increased by 6.9 percent.

Research shows that students of color from households with low income are more likely to face barriers to academic success during their K-12 years, which can then cause them to miss out on merit-based scholarships[45] like Florida's Bright Futures. As such, the continued emphasis on merit-based scholarships could further marginalize students with low income from the higher education system, adding yet another barrier to their economic mobility and the shared prosperity of all Floridians.

Figure 6. GENERAL REVENUE SPENDING ON FLORIDA'S UNIVERSITIES BELOW PRE-RECESSION LEVELS

University spending per student (FTE) by source, adjusted for inflation.



Source: FPI analysis of State University System of Florida data. Does not include college system data.

EDUCATION FACILITY CONSTRUCTION

→ Current landscape

Funding for school capital expenses, like construction, repairs, and technology improvements, has not rebounded from the deep cuts after the recession.[46] Florida's state and local investment in capital expenses remain 71 percent below 2008 levels, after accounting for inflation, which is the second largest cut in the nation. The lack of funds has come at a cost — the Florida Chapter of the American Society for Civil Engineers (ACSE) gives the infrastructure of the state's schools a D+ for quality.[47]

Education fixed capital outlay funds are used to build public schools, colleges, and university buildings, and pay for debt service. The primary funding for these fixed capital outlays, which are the appropriations for the construction and maintenance of buildings, comes from the Public Education Capital Outlay and Debt Service Fund (PECO), which is made up of revenue from the gross receipts tax (sales tax on gas and electricity) and the tax on communication services (landline phone, cable, satellite, and cellular phone services). Historically, this revenue has been used for issuing bonds. From FY 1992-93 to FY 2010-11, the state used the PECO funds to issue bonds for capital projects totaling $12.1 billion; however, during then Governor Rick Scott's tenure, only one PECO bonding project was approved.

→ Budget

EDUCATION FACILITY CONSTRUCTION BUDGET					
		FY 2020-21 Budget			
	Current Year	**House**	**Senate**	**GAA**	**Final Budget (Post-Vetoes)**
Debt Service	$1,108,421,653	$1,051,503,210	$1,051,503,210	$1,051,503,210	$1,051,503,210
Maintenance, Repair, Remodeling: Charter Schools	$158,209,945	$169,600,000	$169,600,000	$169,600,000	$169,600,000
Maintenance, Repair, Remodeling: Public schools, colleges, universities	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
School Safety Grant Program	$0	$50,000,000	$0	$355,038,430	$321,038,430
Total other projects	$311,814,699	$204,889,738	$331,651,000	$1,576,141,640	$1,542,141,640
Total Proposed FY 2020-21 Budget	$1,578,446,297	$1,475,991,948	$1,562,103,210		

Governor DeSantis has continued the trend of opting not to leverage PECO funds to bond for education projects; no projects were bonded in the final budget, or in the previous fiscal year.

The budget:

- **Decreases the total fixed capital outlay budget by $36.3 million, for a total of $1.54 billion.** Of this total, $1.05 billion is earmarked to pay for debt service on bonding, $56.9 million less than current year funding.

- **Funds *only* charter schools for maintenance, repair, and remodeling**. The budget includes $169.6 million for maintenance and repair of charter schools without specifying any such funding for public schools, colleges, or universities. The current-year budget also only funds charter schools for maintenance, while the governor's proposal included $136.5 million for public schools, colleges, and universities. The divergence is important to note given the extreme need for repair and maintenance of Florida's public schools, as noted above.

Final FY 2020-21 Budget:

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

→ Current Landscape

Florida continues to fall behind when it comes to promoting economic security and self-sufficiency for residents who are struggling.

The lack of affordable housing in Florida is putting a strain on residents. The state ranks 47th in the nation for its availability of affordable housing, with only 26 affordable and available housing units for every 100 extremely low-income households.[48] The continued sweep of the Sadowski Affordable Housing Trust Fund has contributed to this shortage. Between FY 2001-02 and FY 2019-20, more than $2.6 billion was taken from the fund and moved into the general revenue stream to support other appropriations.

→ Budget

GENERAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET

		FY 2020-21 Budget			
	FY 2019-20 Budget	**House**	**Senate**	**GAA**	**Final Budget (Post-Vetoes)**
Appropriation Amount	$7,166,014,476	$6,060,300,262	$6,443,515,092	$6,438,993,326	$6,113,580,103
Difference from FY 2019-20 Budget		- $1,105,714,214	- $722,499,384	- $727,021,150	- $1,052,434,373

Energy Assistance

The budget maintains funding for the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) at prior-year level of $2 million.[49] WAP makes energy-saving repairs to the homes or apartments of Floridians with low income who need help weatherizing their residences to reduce energy costs. Similarly, the budget includes $16 million in funding for the Low-Income Housing Assistance Program (LIHEAP) at the previous fiscal year's level. LIHEAP helps low-income families pay for home heating and cooling costs.[50]

Food Deserts

There is no funding in the budget to help solve Florida's food desert problem. "Food deserts" are parts of the country without access to stores or farmers markets that sell healthy food.[51] These areas are more likely to be located in low-income neighborhoods. Dozens of areas in the Sunshine State qualify as food deserts.[52] According to a study commissioned by the State of Florida, people living in food deserts are more likely to die prematurely from certain cancers, diabetes, stroke, and liver disease than people who have ready access to healthy food.[53]

Food deserts in Florida are a very real problem and warrant a holistic approach to solve, particularly as the pandemic increases food prices and food insecurity. Among other things, public-private partnerships are needed to encourage more grocery stores and farmers markets in underserved areas, as well as mobile markets and corner stores that sell fruits and vegetables at a reasonable price. SNAP benefit levels should be raised to allow struggling families to buy more nutritious food than they currently can afford. Right now, the average SNAP benefit per person per meal is only $1.37 in Florida. Similarly, Florida should adjust TANF payments, which currently are so low that most families can barely pay their rent or utility bills, much less spend any of that assistance on food.

The budget misses the opportunity to fund a long-overdue initiative of collaborative strategies to solve the state's food desert dilemma.

Transparency in Agency Contracts

Government transparency is important to ensure that lawmakers and state agencies are accountable to taxpayers. To that end, the appropriations implementing bill[54] prohibits state agencies from entering into contract service agreements that limit disclosure to either chamber. While this is a step forward, this prohibition should be permanently adopted by statute instead of authorized year by year, and it should be enlarged to allow access to members of the public. All Floridians, not just those in elected office, deserve to know where and how every cent of state money is spent.

Reemployment Assistance

The Reemployment Assistance (RA) program is a critical thread in the safety net for hard working Floridians. Sadly, Florida's RA program, which should help workers who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own make ends meet while they look for work, is consistently at or near dead last in rankings among states in the proportion of jobless workers receiving benefits.[55] Yet, nothing in the budget expressly funds initiatives to reverse Florida's long-standing inability to improve access to the RA program, despite RA's inability to respond to the needs of millions of Floridians who lost jobs or wages due to COVID-19. To the contrary, the budget reduces appropriations for RA by almost $2 million, down from $97.4 million in the previous fiscal year, to $95.6 million.

Economic Development

There is no funding in the budget for the Jobs Growth Grant Fund. The fund had received $40 million in the previous fiscal year, and the proposed amounts for FY 2020-21 varied significantly between the different budget proposals. The fund received $20 million in the GAA but was ultimately vetoed by the governor. The fund has been contentious since it was established in a 2017 special session. It was established as a compromise when the House wanted to eliminate Enterprise Florida and other economic development incentives.

The budget maintains $50 million for Visit Florida, the state's tourism and marketing agency. The agency's funding had been eliminated in the House proposal, and significantly reduced to $26.5 million in the Senate proposal. Visit Florida was slated to "sunset" by July 1, 2020, but legislation passed this session (SB 362) extended its authority until October 2, 2023.

The state's economic development public-private partnership, Enterprise Florida, has also been a source of contention over the past few years, facing severe scrutiny over its use of public funds. The House proposed eliminating funding for Enterprise Florida in its past two budget proposals. However, all budget proposals in FY 2020-21 and the final budget include $16 million for Enterprise Florida, which maintains the funding level for the past two fiscal years.

Affordable Housing

The budget provides $115.3 million in funding for the Sadowski Housing Trust Fund. For the first time in nearly two decades, the budget passed by the Legislature provided full funding for both of the funds that make up the Sadowski Housing Trust Fund. The governor, however, vetoed $225 million from the State Housing Trust Fund in the final budget.

SADOWSKI HOUSING TRUST FUND

		FY 2020-21 Budget			
	FY 2019-20 Budget	**House**	**Senate**	**GAA**	**Final Budget (Post-Vetoes)**
Local Government Housing Trust Fund	$111,560,000	$103,000,000	$267,200,000	$225,000,000	$0
State Housing Trust Fund	$89,040,000	$44,000,000	$119,800,000	$115,000,000	$115,000,000
Total Funding Sweeps	$125,000,000	$240,000,000	$0	$0	$225,000,000
Total Housing Support	$200,600,000	$147,000,000	$387,000,000	$340,000,000	$115,000,000

The Sadowski Housing Trust Fund supports two programs for expanding the availability of affordable housing:

- **The State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) Program,** which is administered by the Florida Housing Finance Corporation (FHFC) and distributes funds to local governments for the creation and preservation of affordable homeownership and multifamily housing. The budget allocates $115.3 million for this program and recommends that at least 20 percent of the housing units developed through this funding be set aside for persons with special needs, persons with developmental disabilities, and the elderly.

- **The State Apartment Incentive Loan (SAIL) Program**, which is also administered by FHFC and provides low-interest loans to developers for affordable housing development. The final budget cut $225 million from this program. As a substitute, the governor has allocated funds from the CARES Act to the tune of $250 million. However, while SAIL funds are usually used and distributed in various different ways, CARES Act dollars can only be used for COVID-19 related issues and must be expended by the end of 2020.

Lawmakers increased funding for affordable housing in FY 2018-19 and FY 2019-20, to $123.6 million $200.6 million, respectively. But it is worth noting that a significant portion of these increases had gone specifically for areas impacted by Hurricane Michael. This year's budget also includes $30 million for hurricane recovery efforts for the counties that were strongly affected by hurricane Michael.

More than $2.6 billion has been swept from the Sadowski Trust Fund since FY 2002, resulting in 94,000 foregone affordable housing units.[56] The Sadowski Coalition estimates that full funding in the current fiscal year would result in more than 30,000 jobs and $4.4 billion in positive economic impact.[57]

Final FY 2020-21 Budget:

NATURAL RESOURCES / ENVIRONMENT / GROWTH MANAGEMENT / TRANSPORTATION (NREGMT)

→ Current Landscape

In a disaster-prone state like Florida, investment in environmental conservation efforts and updated state infrastructure are of the utmost importance. Such investments are particularly important in South Florida, where climate equity and gentrification are growing issues of concern.[58] The rising sea levels have made higher elevation properties more desirable to investors and developers, putting low-income families who reside in these regions at risk of being displaced.[59]

A study by the Office of Economic and Demographic Research noted that “hurricanes, tropical storms and other shocks have a negative effect on the attractiveness of the state to visitors and state tax revenues. Depending on the magnitude of the shock, the state may need to spend additional dollars to restore the beaches while also experiencing reduced revenues.”[60] Not only do natural disasters impact tourism, they also cause economic and physical devastation within impacted communities.

The ASCE gave Florida an overall grade of “C” in its 2016 Infrastructure Report Card, with even lower grades on indicators like coastal areas, drinking water, schools, and stormwater.[61] Moreover, while the governor claims that “Florida has one of the best transportation systems in the country,”[62] the reality is that the state is in dire need of increased funding and long-term planning, especially with regard to public transportation. According to the ASCE scorecard, a nominal 2 percent of commutes to work in Florida were made via public transit, which points to low quality and availability.

Florida lawmakers have also siphoned trust fund monies meant for environmental protection since the Great Recession, even after voters approved a ballot measure in 2014 that required 33 percent of the net revenue collected from the excise tax on documents to be put into the Land Acquisition Trust Fund. Other ongoing issues in the state include toxic algae blooms like red tide and beach erosion. Another recent concern is the Department of Environmental Protection’s decision to allow exploratory oil drilling into the Panhandle’s Apalachicola River floodplain, one of the state’s most vital freshwater sources for millions of Floridians.[63]

→ Budget

NATURAL RESOURCES/ENVIRONMENT/GROWTH MANAGEMENT/TRANSPORTATION BUDGET					
		FY 2020-21 Budget			
	FY 2019-20 Budget	**House**	**Senate**	**GAA**	**Final Budget (Post-Vetoes)**
Appropriation Amount	$14,728,172,340	$14,395,033,601	$14,671,166,224	$14,801,367,235	$14,674,865,566
Difference from FY 2019-20 Budget		- $333,138,739	- $57,006,116	$73,194,895	- $53,306,774

Transportation

The budget includes $10.3 billion for the Department of Transportation (DOT), funded through the State Transportation Trust Fund.

Specifically, $90 million is recommended for the Transportation Work Program that would fund the launching of DOT's Five-Year Work Program, which is budgeted at $9.7 billion, and includes funding for the new Multi-Use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (M-CORES). The previous fiscal year's budget allocated $45 million in initial funds for this program. The Five-Year Work Program, M-CORES, is the result of SB 7068, a controversial bill that was heralded by former Senate President Bill Galvano. M-CORES is an aggressive plan to expand the highway system in rural areas of the state by creating three new toll roads and other transportation and economic initiatives. It also provides funding for other programs, including: the Small County Road Assistance and Small County Outreach Programs, which rehabilitate and repair roads and bridges in rural areas; and the Transportation Disadvantaged Program, which provides services for individuals with low income who are living with disabilities, especially seniors.

M-CORES has been critiqued by environmental and community advocates. The more than 330 miles of proposed toll roads would endanger over 52,800 acres of undeveloped land, which includes sensitive animal habitats as well as critical ecosystems such as wetlands, springs, and aquifer recharge areas. The economic benefit to rural communities is also in question, as the new roads would encourage more unsustainable sprawl development.[64]

Several advocacy organizations including FPI have asked the governor to re-appropriate the funds for M-CORES, particularly in light of the COVID-19 economic recession, but to no avail. That is because M-CORES is enshrined in state laws, and the Legislature's approval is needed to make an amendment. While funds for M-CORES remained unscathed, the governor aggressively vetoed money for various other transportation programs that amounted to $40 million. This is important considering that Florida's existing infrastructure, including roads, public transit, and bridges, is already in need of maintenance and repair. The ACSE gives Florida a "C" grade in its Infrastructure Report Card.[65] Funding the state's existing infrastructure and making meaningful investments in rural communities in areas such as education, health care, and conservation would have a much more significant economic impact and return for the state.

Disaster Planning & Recovery

The budget provides roughly $1.47 billion in federal and state funding for Emergency Management (EM) to provide disaster relief and recovery, down from the current funding level of more than $2 billion. This reflects vetoes made by Governor DeSantis, including $2 million for a Statewide Comprehensive Flood Plan Model, $550,000 for the City of South Bay's Emergency Shelter and Care Center, and $3.5 million for the State Emergency Operations Center.

The previous fiscal year's budget included a 10-day tax-free holiday for disaster preparedness supplies, which covered purchases such as modestly priced self-powered radios and lights, tarps, tie-down kits, batteries, and generators. The final tax package (HB 7097) will provide a similar tax-free holiday in FY 2020-21.

In addition to EM funding, the budget allocates $30 million for Affordable Housing Recovery, including $20 million for the Hurricane Housing Recovery Program for Hurricane Michael and $10 million to the Florida Housing Finance Corporation to assist Floridians with down payment and closing cost payments as part of its Homebuyer Loan Program for those purchasing a home to be used as a primary residence in the Hurricane Michael-impacted counties of Bay, Jackson, Gulf, Calhoun, Gadsden, Washington, Liberty, Franklin, Wakulla, Taylor, and Holmes.

D-SNAP

The budget passed by the Legislature earmarked $250,000 for a pilot project in Bay and Walton Counties to modernize the delivery of Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance program (D-SNAP)[66] benefits through mobile technology. However, this appropriation was vetoed by Governor DeSantis.

D-SNAP, a program administered by DCF on the state level and the USDA on the federal level, helps people without adequate income and resources put food on the table after a disaster. Examining efficient ways to deliver D-SNAP after a disaster makes sense. However, if this pilot is proposed again next year, details[67] of several unique factors must be considered, including fiber network outages that hinder delivery of broadband and mobile phone service to affected regions after a disaster, as well as individual service limitations or data caps that may frustrate use of smartphones to transact D-SNAP business.

Environment

Overall, the budget shows that environmental issues like Everglades restoration and the Florida Forever program remain priorities for state leaders. However, Governor DeSantis vetoed over 100 local water projects that municipalities had secured funding for in the Legislature's budget this March (e.g. drinkable water improvements, septic-to-sewer conversions for residents, flood mitigation, wetlands restoration). Investing fully in these areas is key to protecting the state's natural resources and unique ecosystem, mitigating the effects of climate change, and keeping the state's drinking water safe and plentiful for the growing number of Florida residents and visitors.

Florida Forever

The budget brings Florida Forever program funding to $100 million, a major increase of $67 million. Going forward, though, environmental advocates contend that $100 million annually should serve as a funding floor, not a ceiling. Florida Forever is a critical program that allows the state to acquire and preserve ecologically important land and prevent future environmental problems. The Florida Forever Act was passed in 1999, authorizing $300 million in bonds for 10 years to support conservation efforts. Funding was appropriated in full until 2008, when it was then significantly reduced or eliminated. The FY 2018-19 funding level of $100.8 million was the largest amount of funding in a decade.

FLORIDA FOREVER PROGRAM BUDGET

		FY 2020-21 Budget Proposals			
	FY 2019-20 Budget	**House**	**Senate**	**GAA**	**Final Budget (Post-Vetoes)**
Appropriation Amount	$33,000,000	$20,000,000	$108,000,000	$100,000,000	$100,000,000
Difference from Current Year Budget		- $13,000,000	+ 75,000,000	+ 67,000,00	+ 67,000,000

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

The budget increases funding for the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) by $25 million. For the past 20 years, the FWC has coordinated the state's fish and wildlife research, enforced hunting and fishing laws, and addressed nuisance species and loss of animal habitat. The FWC is central to managing the rich array of Florida's natural species, including nearly 600 land animals and 700 native marine and freshwater fish.[68]

Everglades

Everglades funding fell marginally below prior-year levels. The Everglades is one of the most endangered natural resources, yet nearly 1 in 3 Floridians rely on it for their water supply.[69] The FY 2020-21 budget allocates a few million less to Everglades projects than last year, mostly shifting money away from restoration and bonds to fund an increase in protection endeavors. Governor DeSantis has made supporting the rich biodiversity of the region that makes it so unique and vital to the state a key priority; both current and FY 2019-20 allocations reflect this.

Local Water Projects

Funding for local water projects was cut by nearly $21 million for FY 2020-21. While Governor DeSantis has voiced his support for water quality improvement and heralded this year's passage of the Clean Waterways Act, this dramatic reduction in local funding belies those promises. Moreover, as advocates contend, the Act as it was ultimately passed lacks the accountability measures necessary to combat the state's water problems, like pollution and outdated infrastructure.[70] The Act also preempts local governments' ability to pass their own waterway protection policies. This, coupled with drastic budget cuts, disempowers local communities and thwarts the intergovernmental cooperation necessary to truly preserve Florida's most precious resource.

Springs Restoration and Beaches

The prior fiscal year appropriations of $50 million each for springs restoration and beach projects are maintained in this year's budget**.** Florida has more than 1,000 springs,[71] but development and pollution severely restrict their water quality and flow. Restoring the springs is pivotal to protecting Florida's marine life, as well as preserving the natural beauty that millions of state residents and visitors of the springs admire each year. Beach project funding supports DEP's work to address erosion of nearly 420 miles of the state's beaches, just over half of which have been restored since the state allocated designated funding in 1998. Continuing these efforts is pivotal to managing the damages of climate change and keeping Florida's coastal tourism industry thriving. Just a few years ago, Florida received a D+ from the ASCE for management of its coastal areas.[72]

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