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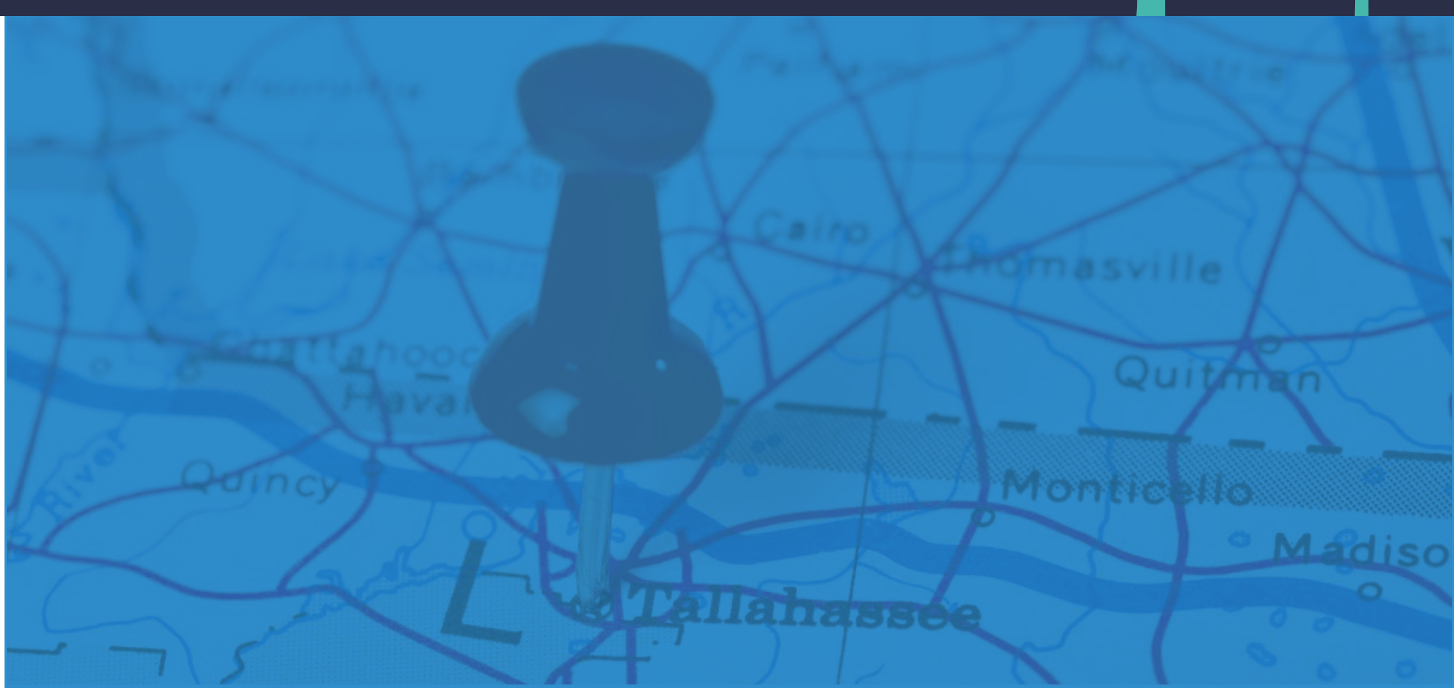
FLORIDA HOUSE & SENATE FY 2022-23 BUDGETS: SUMMARY BY ISSUE AREA

March 2022



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Executive Summary

The Florida Senate passed its fiscal year (FY) 2022-23 budget proposal (SB 2500) on February 9, 2022. The proposal, which totals $108.6 billion, represents a 7 percent increase over the current year budget.[1] One week later, the Florida House of Representatives passed a $105.3 billion proposal (HB 5001), which represents a 3.7 percent increase over the current year funding level.

Introduction: A “Post-Covid” Economy for Some, Not All

While the start of a new year brought the hope of a return to “normal” for some Floridians, the realities of COVID-19 remained as stark as ever for many in the Sunshine State. For those continuing to face mounting employment and housing insecurity, families and caregivers of young children ineligible for the COVID-19 vaccine, people with compromised immune systems, and others, the start of 2022 has not been a new beginning. As much of the state and nation move on to a “post-COVID” mindset, the very real health and economic impacts of the pandemic persist in Florida's economy and communities.

Without the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), and other federal relief packages, the state’s public services would have most likely seen severe budget cuts, and many more individuals and families would have been pushed into poverty.[2]

Despite the tremendous impact of these federal funds, decisions about their allocation during the development of the FY 2022-23 budget have once again occurred behind closed doors, without any public input. Though these funds are also time-limited — i.e., meant to provide relief for the pandemic’s immediate impacts — the Legislature could have also used these funds to jumpstart investments in Florida children, families, workers, and communities for the long term. In Florida Policy Institute’s (FPI’s) final analysis of the FY 2021-22 budget, the organization noted that the 2021 legislative session could have been an opportunity to begin creating a truly shared economic recovery. Unfortunately, the House and Senate have missed this chance yet again in their respective budget proposals for FY 2022-23.

The “Roadmap to Shared Prosperity in Florida” is FPI’s blueprint for improving economic mobility, health, and fiscal stability for families in the Sunshine State,[3] principles that are important now more than ever. This includes:

- fostering community well-being by investing in education and health;
- spurring sustainable growth by promoting equitable economic development, investing in smart infrastructure, and improving climate resilience;
- advancing shared prosperity by nurturing inclusive communities and building a strong safety net; and
- cleaning up and modernizing the tax code for a stronger future.

COVID-19 has laid bare the deep inequities at the core of Florida's economy. The state must pursue policies (like preserving investments and raising revenue) to ensure a recovery from this recession and a stronger, more equitable economic foundation for the state's future.

FPI has analyzed the House and Senate FY 2022-23 budget proposals in the context of the roadmap's principles.

→ Do the budget proposals include meaningful investments in education and health that will foster community well-being?

The House and Senate recommend increases to the state's portion of the K-12 funding formula (the Florida Education Finance Program or FEFP) and the Base Student Allocation (BSA). The Senate's proposed BSA, while in nominal dollars is the highest on record, is lower than it was before the Great Recession after adjusting for inflation. Notably, there is still much in federal relief funding for education that remains unallocated. Both proposed budgets also include funding to increase eligibility for the School Readiness Program from 150 percent of the federal poverty threshold to 200 percent.

Neither the House nor the Senate propose cuts to eligibility for Medicaid services. Also, both budget proposals include full funding for Medicaid caseloads. Both chambers, however, propose cuts in reimbursements for services offered by safety-net hospitals. Such cuts would be avoided if Florida expanded its Medicaid program, which the chambers failed to include in their proposals.

Additionally, despite some increases, neither proposal includes adequate funding to reduce long waitlists for home- and community-based services (HCBS) for Floridians with disabilities and older adults. These services are designed to reduce their chances of requiring long-term institutional care (e.g., nursing homes). Neither budget proposal includes additional funding to reduce the waitlists for the Statewide Medicaid Managed Care Long Term Care (SMMC-LTC) program, which has the largest HCBS waitlist (over 58,000 people), or the Home Care for the Elderly program, which has a waitlist of 13,286 people.

→ Do the budget proposals include economic development and public infrastructure projects to help promote quality jobs, spur sustainable growth, and improve climate resilience?

A bright spot in both the House and Senate proposals is language that would increase wages for state workers ahead of the scheduled minimum wage increases passed by voters in 2020. The proposals differ in their scope, with the Senate offering a more generous and comprehensive plan that would bring the wage for all full- and part-time state employees — plus some state-funded subcontractors — to $15 per hour, compared to the smaller increase to $13 per hour for certain direct care staff offered by the House.

Investment in Florida's infrastructure — transportation, public buildings, and water treatment systems — is essential, particularly during an economic recession. However, the state's infrastructure is persistently graded poorly by the American Society of Civil Engineers. It is imperative to have modern, climate-resilient facilities in a state prone to hurricanes and floods. Overall, the House and Senate budget proposals include more robust investments in conservation, including substantial increases in funding for the Department of Environmental Protection. Both proposals also include moderate cuts to the Florida Forever program but maintain at least $100 million in funding.

→ Do the budget proposals include provisions to advance shared prosperity by nurturing inclusive communities and building a strong safety net?

In 2021, Governor Ron DeSantis signed into law SB 2512, which reduces the funds earmarked for affordable housing by half while at the same time preventing future sweeps of the Sadowski Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Both the House and Senate proposals include a higher level of funding for the Sadowski fund than the current year budget, which had been the largest appropriation for the trust fund in 12 years. While this is notable progress, permanently reducing the revenue for affordable housing will further hamper Florida's ability to mitigate the state's affordable housing crisis in the long term.

Overall, the House and Senate budget proposals do not include adequate funding to ease the unprecedented hardships that continue to grip Florida's communities recovering from the economic consequences of COVID-19. While families still face difficulty putting food on the table and meeting their day-to-day needs, both the House and Senate propose decreasing Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) payments by $28 million. TANF payments had remained stagnant for nearly three decades, and inflation eroded the payment value significantly. This proposed cut would be detrimental to safety net programs and services. Additionally, neither budget proposal includes needed reforms of Florida's failing Reemployment Assistance Program nor temporary help for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants who experienced a significant loss of benefits this year.

The House and Senate budget proposals include increases in funding for the Department of Corrections, with additional investment in education for people who are incarcerated. However, given the increased need to ensure safety during COVID-19, the House and Senate continue underinvesting in reentry programs and propose insufficient funding to address the fiscal challenges the department has faced in recent years.

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

This year, the Senate's main piggyback bill (CS/SB 1090) looks to make changes to research and development (R&D) expenditure amortization, remove limits on business interest expense (BIE) deductions, and adopt a new bonus depreciation schedule for certain business assets.[4] If passed, CS/SB 1090 will cost $3.5 billion over the next five years, limiting public investments and failing to clean up and modernize the tax code for a strong future.

In contrast, the House has not introduced a standalone piggyback bill. Instead, the House has introduced their tax package (HB 7071), which piggybacks without the BIE and bonus depreciation provisions in CS/SB 1090. Furthermore, HB 7071 includes a series of sales tax holidays (including back-to-school 14-day holiday, disaster preparedness 14-day holiday, 7-day Freedom Week Holiday, 7-day skilled worker tool holiday), new exemptions (including a 2-year exemption for impact-resistant doors and windows, a 1-year exemption for babies and toddler clothes and shoes, 1-year exemption for baby diapers, a 1-year exemption for ENERGY STAR appliances, and a 3-month exemption for children's books). While the House tax package provides much-needed relief to families by offering new sales tax exemptions for baby diapers, clothes, and shoes, the proposal also includes sales tax holidays that are not a long-term solution to Florida's inequitable tax code.[5]

Finally, as a bright spot, neither the House nor Senate have moved to create Governor DeSantis's "Florida Motor Fuel Tax Relief Act of 2022," a temporary gas tax exemption that would cost $1.12 billion and be paid for using funds from the federal American Rescue Plan Act.[6]

While not directly in their budget proposals, the House and Senate also prepare tax packages each year. For example, to calculate corporate income tax (CIT) due, the Sunshine State uses federal taxable income as a starting point. It then modifies it by applying state-based additions, subtractions, and other adjustments. Since Florida uses federal taxable income as a starting point, the state tax code maintains a relationship with the federal Internal Revenue Code (IRC) by piggybacking the IRC as it exists on January 1 of the year.* Since Florida does not have to build an entirely different tax code from scratch, piggybacking leads to substantial administrative savings, uniformity, and reductions in compliance costs. However, sometimes state policymakers choose to decouple or throw out specific tax provisions in the IRC.

** This is known as "static" or "fixed date" conformity and requires legislative action to incorporate any changes made to federal statutes since the last day of conformity. See 2021 Florida Statutes 220.03(2)*

House and Senate FY 2022-23 Budget Proposals:

BUDGET & REVENUE OVERVIEW

Although the final General Appropriations Act (GAA) includes lump-sum appropriations and qualified expenditure categories for the fiscal year, policymakers often include additional appropriations in "back-of-the-bill" sections, which are *not* included in the GAA total for the pertinent fiscal year. The operating budget, however, does not discriminate between GAA sections — instead, it consists of all funding for the state's traditional appropriation categories. Conclusively, the operating budget offers a more accurate picture of government spending increases when compared to the GAA alone.

HOW IS THE STATE BUDGET BROKEN DOWN?

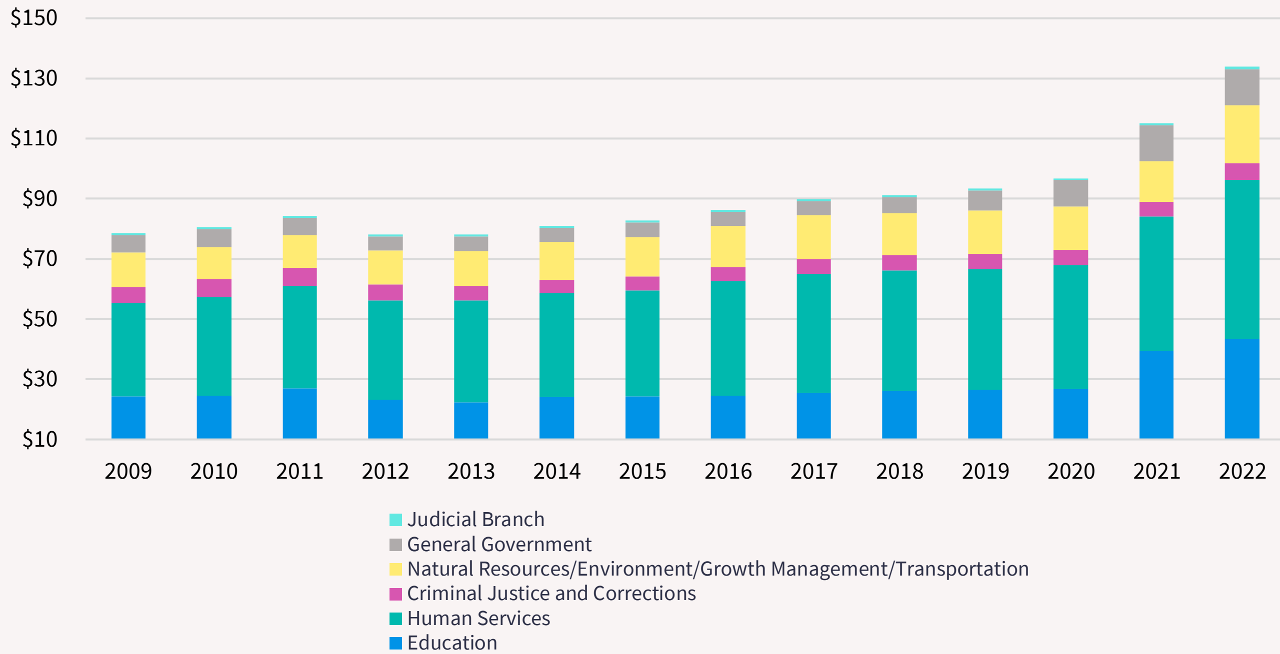
The Florida Constitution specifies that the GAA must be broken down into separate sections for each major program area: (1) education enhancement "lottery" trust fund item, (2) education (all other funds), (3) human services, (4) criminal justice and corrections, (5) natural resources, environment, growth management, and transportation, (6) general government, and (7) judicial branch.

The **"back of the bill" sections** are all remaining sections, outside of the major program area expenditures. These sections typically include employee compensation and benefits, adjustments to the operating budget (for the previous fiscal year), and trust fund sweeps.

The **operating budget** includes the approved plan of operation consistent with the GAA and other substantive legislation or appropriations approved through the interim budget amendment process. It consists of all funding for the state's traditional appropriation categories (i.e., Salaries and Benefits, Other Personal Services, Expenses, Aid to Local Government, Operating Capital Outlay, Food Products, Special Categories, Financial Assistance Payments, Data Processing Services, Pension and Benefits, Claim Bills and Relief Acts, Fixed Capital Outlay, and Grants and Aids to Local Governments and Nonstate Entities).

The operating budget in Florida, like in many states, has mostly seen incremental changes over several years, with notable exceptions. Following the Great Recession (2008-2009), the state budget stagnated until it dropped 7 percent between FY 2010-11 and FY 2011-12, followed by a smaller decrease the next fiscal year. (See *Figure 1*.) As the July 2012 Economic Estimating Conference explained, the Great Recession triggered extreme financial and economic stress statewide, leading to sharp declines in state gross domestic product, personal income growth, and employment.[7] As such, the drop in Florida's operating budget between FY 2010-11 and FY 2011-12 points to a period of sluggish recovery, continued financial difficulties, and budget cuts. Nevertheless, from FY 2008-09 to FY 2019-20, the state's operating budget has gradually increased: during this period, the budget had an average annual growth rate of approximately 2 percent. *Figure 1* depicts this trend and offers insight across Florida's six primary service areas .

Figure 1. Annual Florida Operating Budget by Fiscal Year and Service Area
Total includes general appropriations, vetoes, budget amendments, and reversions.
(Inflation adjusted to 2022, in billions)



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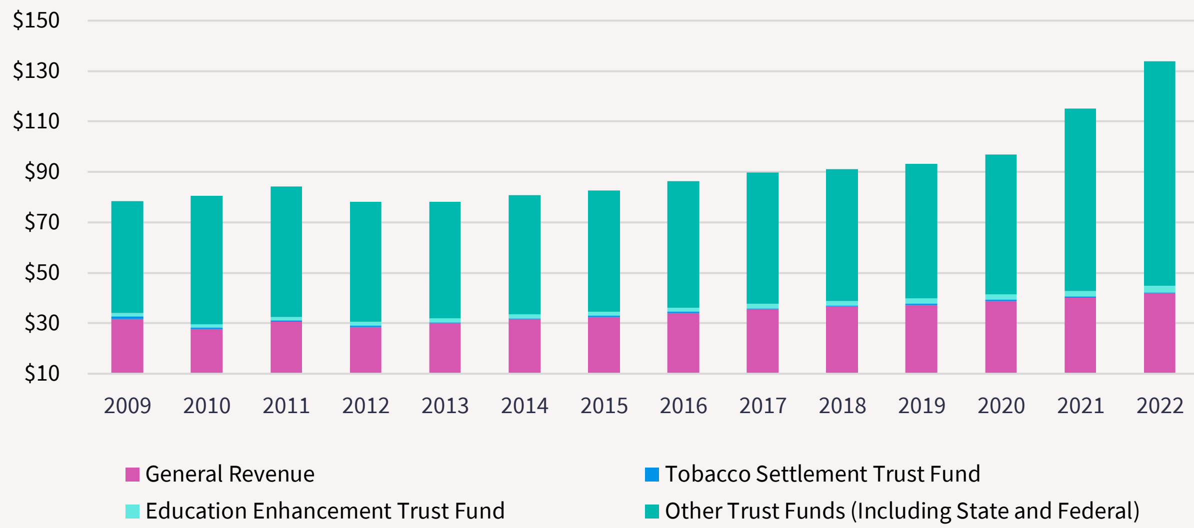
As *Figure 1* shows, Florida's operating budget dropped sharply following the Great Recession and slowly returned to a period of incremental growth up until FY 2019-20. However, against this trend, the state's operating budget skyrocketed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering FY 2020-21 and FY 2021-22, the budget has had a staggering average annual growth rate of approximately 17.6 percent, including significant boosts in Education, General Government, NREGMT, and Human Services.

Florida's State Operating Budget Has Been Boosted by Federal Dollars and Assistance Throughout the Pandemic

Considering the substantial jump in the operating budget, the increase is driven by an influx of federal pandemic-related relief dollars and not by increased general revenue collections or investments. To elaborate, as a component of the operating budget, Florida's General Revenue Fund (GRF) accounts for one-third of the entire budget. Through the GRF, legislators have access to undesignated revenue from tax collection that they can appropriate for any government purpose. In contrast, monies designated or earmarked for specific purposes go to state or federal trust funds, which offer less flexibility than the GRF.

Consequently, general revenue spending is an indicator of statewide financial sustainability tied to tax collections. General revenue in the operating budget sharply declined following the Great Recession and had an average growth rate of about 2 percent through FY 2021-22. Whereas the entire operating budget has substantially increased during the pandemic, general revenue spending continues to exhibit the same pre-pandemic incremental trend. Therefore, the overall increase in the operating budget (*Figure 1*) is not due to increased general revenue but state and federal funding (*Figure 2*).

Figure 2. Annual Florida Operating Budget by Fund Source
Total includes general appropriations, vetoes, budget amendments, and reversions.
(Inflation adjusted to 2022, in billions)



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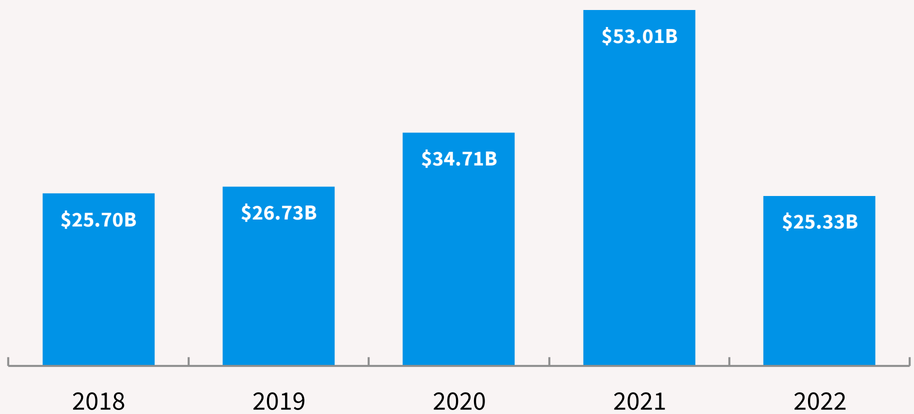
As *Figure 2* corroborates, recent operating budget increases are not due to GRF spending. In response to the pandemic, the federal government stepped in to help state governments. As *Figure 3* shows, federal grants increased from $27 billion in FY 2018-2019 to $35 billion in FY 2019-20, a 30 percent increase. Then, federal grants increased from $35 billion to $53 billion in FY 2020-21, a 53 percent increase. Through these fiscal years, which cover the peak of the pandemic, some key areas that received federal funding include the Agency for Health Care Administration (the bulk of U.S. grants went to the Medical Care Trust Fund), the Department of Economic Opportunity (including critical federal investment to the Unemployment Compensation Benefit Trust Fund), the Department of Education, and the Department of Health. The increase alludes to the important role of the federal government in supporting Florida's operating budget during the pandemic. At the same time, by offering increased assistance, the federal government helped Florida policymakers avoid deep budget cuts and reductions to the GRF.

Figure 3. Total Trust Fund Revenues from Federal Grants Increased During the COVID-19 Peak Years



Source: FPI Analysis of the 5-Year Trust Fund Report found via Transparency Florida

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Florida Lawmakers Have Underfunded Public Services for Over a Decade

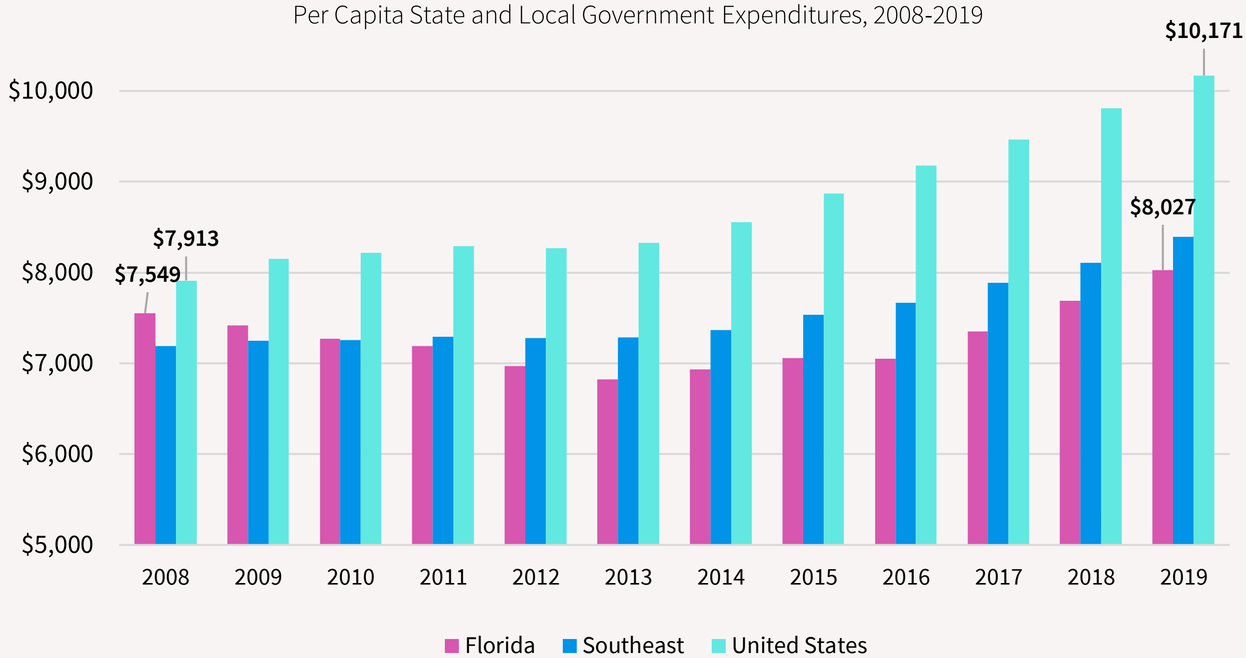
Although federal assistance through FY 2020-21 and FY 2021-22 was substantial, the long-term impact of federal dollars in the operating budget will taper off. For this reason, it is crucial to consider Florida's ability to fund public services with its own revenue. As the state's population continues to increase, change, and age, so will public service demands. Since the early 2000s, Florida's population has grown by 34 percent, from 16 million in 2000 to 21.5 million in 2020, and it is much more diverse. Additionally, Florida is second in the country in the percent of the population age 65 or older.[8] And the population continues to age – today, just over one-third of the population is 57 years of age and older.[9] These changes have implications for the relative size of the labor pool, the need for health care services, the modes of service delivery, and overall tax revenues.

Yet, despite significant ongoing demographic changes, Florida has set a trend of spending less general revenue per capita than most other states, including neighboring states in the Southeast. As *Figure 4* shows, since 2010, per capita public service expenditures in the Sunshine State have consistently trailed investments made in other parts of the country. From 2008 to 2019, Florida per capita local and state government expenditures had an average annual growth rate of approximately 0.6 percent, compared to 1.4 percent across the Southeast and 2.3 percent nationally. Florida trails most of the nation in per capita direct general revenue expenditures in various areas, ranking 49th for elementary and secondary education, 50th for higher education, 49th for public welfare, and 36th for highway infrastructure.[10] This is not surprising given that

Florida also ranks 46th in per capita general revenue collections, behind 44 other states and D.C. Only five other states (Mississippi, Idaho, South Carolina, Alabama, and Tennessee) collect less general revenue per resident. Florida's low ranking is problematic because general revenue helps finance education, health and human services, corrections, natural resource management, growth management, transportation projects, and general government operations.

Figure 4. Florida Ranks 46th On Investment in Public Services

Per Capita State and Local Government Expenditures, 2008-2019



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Finally, conversations about the operating budget, trust fund balances, and per capita general revenue spending do not consider the forgone revenue from tax expenditures. This "shadow budget" has increased substantially since FY 2010, growing on average $607 million each year. In FY 2021-22, Florida's shadow budget will cost the state $24 billion, a number that is likely to continue growing in the coming years.

How Do the House and Senate Propose Funding the FY 2022-23 Budget?

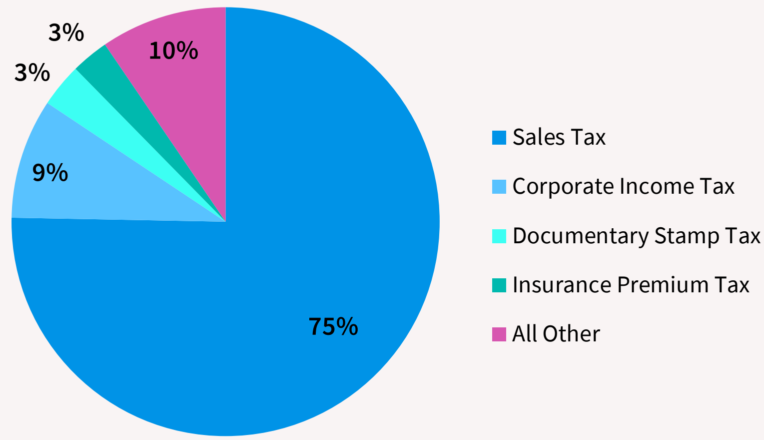
Concerning the budgetary process, the governor released his FY 2022-23 budget proposal on December 9, 2021. His request totaled $99.7 billion, a 2 percent decrease over the current fiscal year's budget of $101.5 billion. Then, on February 16, 2022, the Florida House of Representatives passed its FY 2022-23 budget proposal totaling $105.3 billion, an increase of 3.7 percent over the current fiscal year's budget. On February 9, 2022, the Florida Senate passed its FY 2022-23 budget proposal (SB 2500). The Senate's proposal totals $108.6 billion, a 7 percent increase over the current budget. (See *Table 1*.)

Table 1. Breakdown of Budget Proposals

	Current Year (FY 2021-22)	House Bill 5001 (2022)	Senate Bill 2500 (2022)
General Revenue Fund (% of Total Appropriations)	$36,343,570,215 (36%)	$39,157,818,922 (37%)	$41,715,792,783 (38%)
General Revenue Fund Difference from Current FY 2022	-	+$2,814,248,707	+$5,372,222,568
State Trust Funds (% of Total Appropriations)	$25,260,949,492 (25%)	$28,417,610,195 (27%)	$28,366,905,703 (26%)
State Trust Funds Difference from Current FY 2022		*+$3,156,660,703*	*+$3,105,956,211*
Federal Trust Funds (% of Total Appropriations)	$39,939,122,876 (39%)	$37,701,375,766 (36%)	$38,514,198,941 (35%)
Federal Trust Funds Difference from Current FY 2022		*-$2,237,747,110*	*-$1,424,923,935*
Total Appropriations	**$101,543,642,583**	**$105,276,804,883**	**$108,596,897,427**
Total Difference from Current FY 2022		*+$3,733,162,300*	*7,053,254,844*

As *Table 1* shows, legislators have access to the General Revenue Fund (GRF) and various state and federal trust funds to fund their proposals. The GRF comprises undesignated revenue from tax collections and accounts for 37 percent of the House proposal and 38 percent of the Senate proposal. For this reason, it is vital to consider Florida's revenue sources. (See *Figure 5*.) Seventy-five percent of Florida's revenue comes from sales tax collections, followed by corporate income taxes (9 percent), documentary stamp tax (3 percent), insurance premium tax (3 percent), and others (10 percent).

Figure 5. 75% of General Revenue comes from Sales Tax Collections



Source: The Florida Legislature, Fiscal Analysis in Brief (2021)

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Rainy Day Funds

Rainy day funds are another source of revenue policymakers can tap into. Specifically, rainy day funds are budget reserves that policymakers can use when recessions or other unexpected events cause revenue to fall or spending to rise. Also, rainy day funds can help reduce economic harm during crises.[11] In Florida, policymakers have access to two central rainy-day funds:

- **Unallocated General Revenue Fund**. This fund holds about $7.3 billion.[12] The Unallocated General Revenue Fund consists of excess general dollars needed to meet General Revenue Fund appropriations for the current fiscal year.

- **Budget Stabilization Fund (BSF),** which holds about $2.7 billion.[13] The BSF can only be used to offset a declared deficit or provide funding for an emergency. Consequently, policymakers have limited access to the BSF.

What Comes Next in the Budget Process?

Joint Budget Conference Committees have been formed to negotiate differences between the House and the Senate budget bills. Negotiations will continue until a revised, single budget is agreed upon. The GAA budget is then sent back to the Florida House and Senate for a vote. Upon passage, the GAA is sent to the governor, who can veto specific line items within the budget. The Legislature can override vetoes if two-thirds of the members in each chamber vote to do so. Once the budget adoption process concludes, the governor signs the final GAA into law, which goes into effect on July 1.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

→ Current Landscape

Florida ranks near the bottom on multiple national rankings of health and wellness.[14] Even before COVID-19, the state had 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. The ongoing failure to expand Florida Medicaid contributes to the growing racial health gap exacerbating health disparities in communities of color.[15]

Florida also lags far behind other states in investments for mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) treatment. Twenty percent of adults in Florida experience a mental illness.[16] Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for mental health and SUD care is increasing. 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 512,000 uninsured Florida adults with mental illness — the sixth-highest percentage in the country.[17] Twelve Floridians die each day due to opioid overdoses,[18] and overdose deaths are surging during the pandemic.[19] As of December 2020, over 2,500 adults and children were on waitlists for outpatient SUD and/or mental health treatment.[20]

The fastest-growing age group in Florida is people 65 to 74 years old. The number of Floridians 65 and older is about the same as the entire population of Kentucky. Home- and community-based services (HCBS) are critical in helping Florida's growing senior population, as well as the one in four Floridians who have a disability, 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. Also, nursing homes cost anywhere from eight to 24 times more to the individual and taxpayers than HCBS.[21] However, enormous HCBS waitlists in the tens of thousands grow substantially year after year, keeping these services out of reach for many.

The pandemic has been a stark reminder that Florida has made deep cuts to public health programs over the years. These have been particularly severe for county health departments intended to be the state's frontline hubs for responding to crises. Notably, between 2010 and 2018, Florida cut county health department funding by 10 percent, shrinking staff levels from 12,800 to 9,300.[22]

With billions of additional federal dollars available to the state under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), lawmakers avoided most cuts and bumped up investment in already woefully underfunded health and human services. ARPA increases the portion of costs covered by the federal government (the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage, or FMAP) for two years if Florida expands its Medicaid program. The expansion funding increase would bring in an estimated $3 billion to $3.5 billion in new federal funding.[23] These new Medicaid dollars under ARPA would be in addition to the enhanced FMAP (an additional 6.2 percent) that Florida has already been receiving since January 2020 under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FCCRA). This enhanced FMAP will most likely continue at least through June 2022. For FY 2021-22, due to these increased federal Medicaid dollars, Florida is projected to realize a general revenue surplus of nearly $664 million.[24]

In addition, recognizing the increased demands for HCBS during the pandemic, ARPA offers states a 10 percent increase in the FMAP for these services for one year (April 1, 2021-March 30, 2022). The increased federal funds must supplement current state funding to enhance, expand or strengthen these services. Florida has received conditional approval from the federal government for its HCBS spending plan, which is projected to bring in an additional $1 billion.[25]

Concerning the well-being of children and families, both the House and Senate would continue allowing the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program to languish. Florida's TANF program, the state's core safety net program for providing families with children the means to meet basic needs, does a poor job of reaching and assisting families struggling to make ends meet. For every 100 families with income below the federal poverty level, only about 13 receive cash assistance from TANF — 42 fewer than in 1996.[26] In addition, adjusted for inflation, Florida's TANF benefit levels have dropped more than 41 percent since 1996.[27]

Fortunately, through ARPA, Florida has an additional $35 million in Pandemic Emergency Assistance (PEA) funds for TANF. This is an extraordinary opportunity to supplement cash assistance to TANF participants and help them meet pandemic-related expenses.[28]

Although Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits have decreased statewide due to the end of pandemic-related enhancements and food costs are on the rise, neither the House nor Senate propose direct relief to SNAP recipients. The state is only taking a few steps to address food insecurity statewide, provide public assistance recipients with meaningful benefit levels, or educate and train public assistance recipients with the skills they need to get and keep good-paying jobs.

→ Budget

Table 2. Health and Human Services Budget

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES BUDGET				
		FY 2022-23 Budget Proposals		
	Current Year	**Governor**	**House**	**Senate**
Appropriation Amount	$44,562,737,298	$45,840,600,000	$47,058,700,000	$47,867,200,000
Difference from Current Year Budget		+$1,277,862,702	+$2,495,962,702	+$3,304,462,702

Each chamber proposes increases for the Health and Human Services budget — a total of $47.1 billion in the House and $47.8 billion in the Senate, exceeding current year funding of $44.5 billion (*Table 2*). Most of this increased funding is allocated to the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) to operate the Medicaid program. Notably, federal dollars make up more than 70 percent of both chambers' proposals.

Neither chamber is proposing cuts to eligibility or Medicaid services. Another bright spot in both budgets is the proposed minimum hourly wage increases for Medicaid provider employees across multiple health care settings. However, the Legislature's decisions to not expand Medicaid, reduce the Statewide Medicaid Managed Care Long Term Care (SMMC-LTC) waitlists, nor fully fund behavioral and public health programs are short-sighted. Furthermore, vital services needed to meet Florida's growing population of older adults, children, and people with disabilities remain seriously underfunded.

Medicaid Caseload

The House and Senate proposals include full funding for Medicaid caseloads. Per Florida's Social Services Estimating Conference, Medicaid caseloads will remain at about 5 million in FY 2022-23.[29] However, it is crucial to note that Florida has been receiving and will continue to receive increased federal Medicaid dollars during FY 2022-23. This is due to the March 2020 Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), which gives states a 6.2 percentage-point increase in the federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP, or the federal share of Medicaid spending) as long as the COVID-19 federal public health emergency is in place. This has significantly helped the state cover higher Medicaid costs during the pandemic. To receive the FMAP increase, Florida policymakers may not cut eligibility or make it harder to enroll or retain Florida Medicaid (referred to as "the maintenance of effort" or "MOE" requirement).

KidCare

Projected caseloads in the KidCare programs (Florida Healthy Kids, MediKids, and Children's Medical Services) are fully funded at $494.9 million, including $362.9 million in federal funds, in both the House and Senate proposals. As of February 2022, there were 125,062 children enrolled in these programs.[30] Enrollment has significantly declined since March 2020 due to the recession and resulting job losses, with a portion of children being shifted to Medicaid. Projected lower enrollment for FY 2022-23 and an enhanced federal match under FFCRA have reduced the need for state funding.

Medicaid Eligibility/Service Cuts

Neither the House nor the Senate are proposing any cuts to Medicaid eligibility requirements or benefits. However, both the House and Senate are proposing cuts to hospital rates. This could disproportionately impact the capacities of safety net hospitals to serve uninsured, underinsured, and Medicaid beneficiaries. (See the *Hospital Medicaid Reimbursement* section.)

Canadian Prescription Drug Importation Program

Both chambers include a $15 million appropriation for AHCA to administer the Canadian Prescription Drug Importation Program. Florida law[31] authorizes the state to purchase prescription drugs from Canada for use in various state programs, including Medicaid. The budget also authorizes the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Department of Children and Families, Department of Health, and the Department of Corrections to transfer funding to purchase medications through the importation program. In November 2020, the

Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America filed a lawsuit to stop these initiatives in Florida and other states. Before starting the program, Florida must get federal approval of its plan, which has not happened to date.[32]

Hospital Medicaid Reimbursement

Both chambers propose eliminating about $300 million in "Automatic Rate Enhancements" for hospital services offered by safety-net hospitals. The House proposes an additional $215.9 million hospital rate cut (including state and federal funds) affecting all hospitals. Under the House proposal, the state funds — $100 million — would be re-directed to help train future nurses.[33]

Both budget proposals would continue to rely on multiple "supplemental payment" programs (e.g., disproportionate share hospital program, low-income pool) to support hospitals and other health care providers.[34] Most of these programs rely on local entities to raise the state share of Medicaid funding (referred to as intergovernmental transfers or IGTs) required to draw down federal funds. If the total state share is not raised, the amount of federal funding is reduced.

For example, for multiple years, both budgets have included a $1.5 billion appropriation for the Low Income Pool (LIP) program, which provides supplemental funding for mainly uncompensated hospital care costs. In past years, the state has not been able to access the entire $1.5 billion allotment because the full state match portion has not been raised through IGTs. For FY 2020-21, only $1 billion of the $1.5 billion LIP dollars were paid out.[35]

Proposed hospital rate cuts underscore the ongoing challenges of unpredictable year-to-year funding to sustain sufficient hospital capacity to meet the needs of Medicaid beneficiaries as well as other under-served communities. If Florida lawmakers chose to expand the state's Medicaid program, millions more in stable federal funding would support hospitals.[36]

Health Care Worker Wage Increases

A bright spot in the chambers' health care budgets is that both the House and Senate propose raising hourly minimum wages for health care employees working for Medicaid providers.

The House proposes raising the minimum wage to $13 per hour across various health care settings, including hospitals, nursing homes, intermediate care facilities, and Medicaid managed care prepaid health plans. Funds appropriated to AHCA would be passed through to Medicaid providers to use "exclusively to increase the salaries of direct care staff." According to the House proposal, AHCA would have to submit a report to chairs of the Florida House and Senate Appropriations Committees evaluating the impact of the rate increase on the average salaries of direct care staff by December 1, 2022.

The Senate's proposal is more robust and would impact more workers. It includes an appropriation to AHCA "for the sole purpose of raising wages of employees of Medicaid providers who provide services under the Florida Medicaid program to at least $15 per hour as of October 1, 2022." Providers would be required to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that includes an attestation that "every employee of the provider as of October 1, 2022, will be paid at least $15 per hour." The release of these funds to AHCA would be contingent on AHCA collecting MOUs from at least 80 percent of the providers. Beginning January 1, 2023, employees of providers that have received an increased rate who are not receiving a wage of at least $15 per hour would have a right to sue and obtain damages and attorneys' fees.

Medicaid Institutional Care

Both chambers are proposing increases for nursing home care. However, the most substantial increase — $375 million — is only in the Senate budget.[37] Similar to prior years, both the House and Senate authorize AHCA to transfer funds appropriated for nursing home care to the Statewide Medicaid Managed Care Long Term Waiver to move people from skilled nursing to community-based alternatives, such as their own homes.

Medicaid Expansion

The House and Senate both fail to include language in their proposals that would expand Florida's Medicaid program, even though doing so could benefit more than 800,000 uninsured adult Floridians with low income and save lives.[38] Moreover, a large and growing body of research shows that Medicaid expansion will save state dollars and provide fiscal gains well beyond the cost of expansion.[39] In addition, ARPA provides a substantial financial incentive for states to expand their Medicaid programs. With these incentives, if Florida expanded Medicaid, the state could draw down an additional $3 billion to $3.5 billion in federal dollars over a two-year period.[40]

Community Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Services

The Department of Children and Families administers funding for community mental health and substance use disorder services through seven not-for-profit regional managing entities. This funding is directed to their safety net program serving uninsured or underinsured people.

The House and Senate propose increases over this year's budget of $210 million and $122 million, respectively. However, both budgets continue to rely on time-limited federal grants, such as federal COVID-relief funds and other substantial non-recurring funds. This includes support for crises services, clearly a recurring need. When these non-recuring dollars are exhausted, it will create a funding and treatment "cliff" unless policymakers appropriate state funds to continue the increased service capacity. This creates uncertainty for providers on their capacity to keep delivering services and uncertainty for consumers as to whether they will have access to ongoing treatment.

Finally, the House and Senate would continue funding school-based mental health services as provided for under the 2018 Marjory Stoneman Douglas Act. The Senate proposes an increase from $120 million in the current year budget to $140 million. The House proposes to continue funding at $120 million.

Home- and Community-Based Services (HCBS)

Massive waitlists and slight annual increases for HCBS have left thousands of Floridians languishing without care for years. Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the demand for HCBS has increased substantially, especially among older, homebound adults. Investing more in these programs now can help offset taxpayer costs in the long term. Usually, as older adults wait to receive services, they spend down what little savings they have, gradually becoming eligible for Medicaid. At this stage of life, health care is the most expensive. Investing in preventative HCBS programs can reduce the need for other more costly services such as institutional care.

Current waitlists include all seniors/people with disabilities who have been screened by the appropriate Aging and Disabilities Resource Center and determined to be in need of services.

Compared to FY 2021-22 levels, both the House and Senate propose increases for some of the HCBS programs:

- **The House recommends adding $41.9 million to serve approximately 789 individuals on the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) waiver waitlist.**[41] **The Senate proposal does not include funds for the APD waitlist.** There are 22,759 individuals on the waitlist.[42] APD provides a wide array of medical, social, behavioral, and residential services to individuals whose daily lives are severely hindered by a developmental disability present before adulthood.

- **The House recommends adding $9 million to take approximately 750 people off the Alzheimer's Disease Initiative (ADI) waitlist. The Senate would add $6 million to take approximately 500 people off the waitlist.** The ADI waitlist stands at 8,550 Floridians.[43] ADI is a DOEA program provides respite and support services to family caregivers of individuals living with Alzheimer's disease and similar cognitive disorders.

- **The House recommends adding $6 million to take approximately 660 people off the waitlist for the Community Care for the Elderly (CCE) program. The Senate would add $4.9 million to take 539 Floridians off the waitlist.** The CCE program waitlist stands at 57,022 Floridians. [44] CCE is a DOEA program that 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.

However, neither budget includes additional funding to take people off the waitlist for the Statewide Medicaid Managed Care Long Term Care (SMMC-LTC) program. The SMMC-LTC waitlist includes 55,263 Floridians.[45] This program provides the most robust package of long-term care services. Notably, for every dollar the state spends on SMMC-LTC, it receives $1.56 in federal reimbursement. Plus, the state is currently receiving an even higher federal match for the duration of the federal COVID-19 public health emergency (expected to last through mid-July 2022).

Also, neither the House nor Senate proposals include additional funding to take people off the Home Care for the Elderly (HCE) waitlist. The HCE has a waitlist of 13,286 Floridians.[46] HCE is a DOEA program that provides subsidies to individuals caring for seniors in a private home setting.

Table 3. HCBS Waitlists

HCBS WAITLISTS					
		Number of People Served with Increased Funding in Proposed FY 2022-23 Budgets			
Type of HCBS	**Size of Waitlist***	**FY 2021-22 Budget**	**Governor**	**House**	**Senate**
Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) waiver	22,759	1,900	480	789	0
Alzheimer's Disease Initiative	8,550	244	750	500	575
Community Care for the Elderly Program	57,022	501	660	539	855
Home Care for the Elderly Program	13,286	146	0	0	0

* 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 's estimated cost of $9,090 per individual for CCE and $12,006 per individual for the Alzheimer's Disease Initiative.[47] APD numbers estimate is based on what the Governor is using as a cost per person estimate in his proposed budget: that is $53, 125 per person.

Public Health Funding

Both the House and Senate would continue to fund county health department services at $1 billion. However, neither budget includes funding for additional positions, even though 3,500 positions have been slashed from county health department budgets since 2010.[48]

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a federally funded program that provides healthy food and one-on-one nutrition counseling to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum mothers, along with infants and children under the age of 5 at nutritional risk. Unfortunately, WIC participation of *eligible* families has been on a steady decline for years. In 2021 alone, participation in WIC declined by almost 15,000 people in Florida despite increased food insecurity and the need created by the pandemic.[49] The House and Senate proposals keep funding for Florida's WIC program at $251 million, the same level as FY 2021-22. This funding comes exclusively from the federal government.

WIC holds the promise of a healthier future for low-income infants and children in Florida. The program is associated with better overall health outcomes for infants and children nutritionally at risk. The program is also associated with reducing low-birth-weight rates and improving fetal and cognitive development. In addition to giving low-income children access to a more nutritious diet, WIC plays a role in improving school performance. However, if the participation of eligible families in the program continues to shrink, that promise will not be realized.

The decline in WIC participation calls for funding of collaborative strategic planning by lawmakers, state agencies, and health professionals, alongside eligible families, to explore impediments to participation and effective workable solutions. Because many otherwise eligible families are not being served, Florida should be investing funds from general revenue to explore specific reforms and analyze barriers that keep eligible families from participating in the program.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

The TANF program helps families with very-low incomes make ends meet by providing them cash assistance to pay for subsistence needs like toothpaste, diapers, rent, and utilities.

The current FY 2021-22 budget included an appropriation of $127 million for TANF cash assistance payments. This year, both the House and Senate propose to decrease funding for TANF payments by roughly $28 million.[50] While 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 2022-23,[51] 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. As a result, inflation has eroded the payment value by about 41 percent. The maximum TANF benefit for families in Florida — $303/month for a family of three — is only about 17 percent of the poverty level, which is not enough for families to make ends meet.[52]

Due to stagnant cash assistance levels, Florida's TANF program 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. Lawmakers should increase TANF payment levels to meet children's basic needs in families with low income.

The TANF-linked Pandemic Emergency Assistance (PEA) Fund included in the American Rescue Plan Act may help to temporarily alleviate some of the hardships that TANF participants are experiencing during the pandemic. The PEA Fund provides the state with more than $35 million to meet the emergency needs of struggling families with children, including children of color who are more likely to live in poverty. Although Florida has not yet distributed these funds to eligible families, DCF announced that it plans to use a portion of its PEA to provide clothing allowances to children in need, including children participating in TANF.[53]

The budget proposals also do 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 must 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 attend the program.[54] 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.

Veterans and the Military

Both the House and Senate proposals include increases in funding for the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), which assists veterans in accessing benefits and operates long-term care facilities for veterans in Florida. While current funding for DVA is at $153 million, the House proposes funding DVA at over $202 million. The Senate proposes funding of about $169 million.

However, the Senate and House propose to fund the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) at roughly $65 million, down from its current level of $70 million for FY 2021-22. As part of DMA's appropriation, both the House and Senate propose to fund the National Guard Tuition Assistance (NGTA) program at just over $5 million, an increase of over $1 million from the current fiscal year's funding level. The NGTA assists National Guard members who are seeking undergraduate or certain postgraduate degrees.

House and Senate FY 2022-23 Budget Proposals:

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 13 founding NATO countries: the USA, Canada, and the 11 European countries. Since 1996, the number of people serving ten or more years has tripled. As a result, the state has not adequately responded to the costs and needs associated with its incarcerated population. Inmates' health costs have significantly increased, which caused the department to experience a significant budget deficit in FY 2018-19. However, due to the impact of COVID-19, Florida's prison population has seen a substantial drop in FY 2020-21.[55] Despite the decrease, the DOC continued to face major challenges; illustratively, former DOC Secretary, Mark Inch, has reported that the department is in "crisis" with several vacant security posts, a severe staff shortage, and insufficient funds to fully cover the salaries of all authorized positions.[56] According to a report from the state Criminal Justice Estimating Conference, Florida's prison population is projected to rise to 86,223 by the end of FY 2021-22 and gradually reach 93,414 by the end of FY 2026-27.[57] Consequently, the challenges DOC is grappling with will undoubtedly intensify unless the Legislature enacts the appropriate measures to provide relief.

→ Budget

Table 4. Public Safety & Corrections Budget

PUBLIC SAFETY & CORRECTIONS BUDGET				
		FY 2022-23 Budget Proposals		
	Current Year	**Governor**	**House**	**Senate**
Appropriation Amount	$5,216,002,465	$5,315,700,000	$5,254,300,000	$7,035,100,000
Difference from Current Year Budget		+$99,697,535	+$38,297,535	+$1,819,097,535

Department of Corrections

The House and Senate proposals include additional funding for the Department of Corrections (DOC). However, the Senate's proposed increase is $1.72 billion more than the House's. Specifically, the House allocates $2.93 billion to DOC, whereas the Senate proposes $4.65 billion. DOC's budget has grown by 7 percent in the past 10 years. The department has been dealing with the increasing need to ensure staff safety, fill up various vacancies, and upgrade transportation and building infrastructure. The House and Senate try to provide some relief to the most critical issues DOC facilities have been experiencing for the past decade: understaffing, shortage of educational teachers, and maintenance. A significant portion of DOC's budget over the last two fiscal years has gone toward funding for treatment of Hepatitis C, mental health, and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act as ordered by a court mandate. As a result, critical reentry programs have been consistently underfunded.

Inmate Education

The Senate budget recommends $44 million for basic education skills, whereas the House budget proposes $48 million. Both budgets include funding increases over the current year level of $43 million. These additional dollars are important because hiring and retaining quality teachers has been a persistent issue for the department. Some facilities did not have even one teacher in the past few years.

Maintenance and Repairs

The Senate's proposed budget includes roughly $1.9 billion for maintenance and repair projects at correctional facilities, approximately $1.7 billion more than the House's $191 million appropriation, and an overwhelming increase over the current year budget of $207 million. While the Senate appropriates $650 million to the DOC to build a 4,500-bed correctional institution, and $400 million for the construction of a 250-bed hospital unit for elderly incarcerated people, the House does not.

This striking difference in funding levels between the Senate and House proposals is important because the Senate's recommendations sought to provide critical solutions to some of the issues DOC has been struggling with — an aging population with mounting health complications and deteriorating building infrastructure. Illustratively, several of the state's institutions were built more than five decades ago and are in dire need of renovations. For instance, Cross City Correctional Institution was ordered shut in 2021 due to flooding. Additionally, out of DOC's 623 housing units, only 150 of them have air conditioning, which creates unbearable living conditions during Florida's summers. Further, due to Florida's 85 percent rule, which requires that incarcerated people complete 85 percent of their sentence, people are spending more time in prison. The latter has led to a large elderly population that requires specialized health care.

Health Care

The Senate allocates roughly $568 million for inmate health care services, and the House includes $569 million. Both are slightly more than the current year funding of $567 million. A judge ruled in 2020 that the state can delay treatment for those in the early stages of their Hepatitis C diagnosis. This decision reversed a prior ruling that mandated that all individuals with Hepatitis C should be treated accordingly regardless of stage. Both chambers recommend $85 million for the treatment of infectious diseases.

Operations

The Senate proposes $1.6 billion for all four types of custody operations, whereas the House proposes $1.62 billion. The Senate allocates $19 million to increase the salaries of correctional officers who are in privately-operated correctional facilities. The Senate and House allocate $2.4 million and $1.25 million, respectively, to offer enhanced in-prison and post-release recidivism reduction programs at three correctional facilities. Both budgets grant DOC with the authority to give $1,000 bonuses to new hires such as teachers and correctional officers.

Community Supervision

In the proposed budgets, community supervision would receive $242 million from the Senate and $244 million from the House. Both budget recommendations provide more dollars than the current year funding level of $240 million. Additionally, community substance abuse prevention and evaluation services receive roughly $26 million in both budget proposals, nearly the same amount as the current fiscal year.

Department of Juvenile Justice

The Senate and House budgets include $594 million and $580 million, respectively, for the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). While the House proposes slashing funding from the current budget of $586 million, the Senate recommends $8 million more.

Both proposed budgets include increased funding for detention centers. The House allocates $126 million, whereas the Senate includes $129 million. The Senate's allocation provides $1.6 million for maintenance and repair of detention centers in the Broward, Hillsborough, Broward, and Palm Beach areas.

Both budgets offer an increase in funding for community supervision over the current level of $93 million. The Senate and the House budgets include $94 million and $98 million, respectively. In both proposals, from that funding, roughly $4 million is specifically recommended for providing alternative services to youth who are at risk for commitment.

The Senate budget provides $114 million for non-secure residential programming, and the House budget proposes $108 million. Whereas the Senate recommends $5 million more for detention centers, the House proposal slightly reduces current year funding.

While the Senate proposal includes increased funding compared to the current year budget for delinquency prevention by providing $97 million, the House recommends less funding than the current year. The House proposes $87 million, a $5 million decrease from the current fiscal year. 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 cut to these funding programs would have a sizable impact on communities across the state.

House and Senate FY 2022-23 Budget Proposals:

EDUCATION

Table 5. Education Budget

EDUCATION BUDGET				
		FY 2022-23 Budget Proposals		
	Current Year	**Governor**	**House**	**Senate**
Appropriation Amount	$30,088,215,350	$27,734,700,000	$28,025,900,000	$28,438,900,000
Difference from Current Year Budget		-$2,353,515,350	-$2,062,315,350	-$1,649,315,350

→ Current Landscape

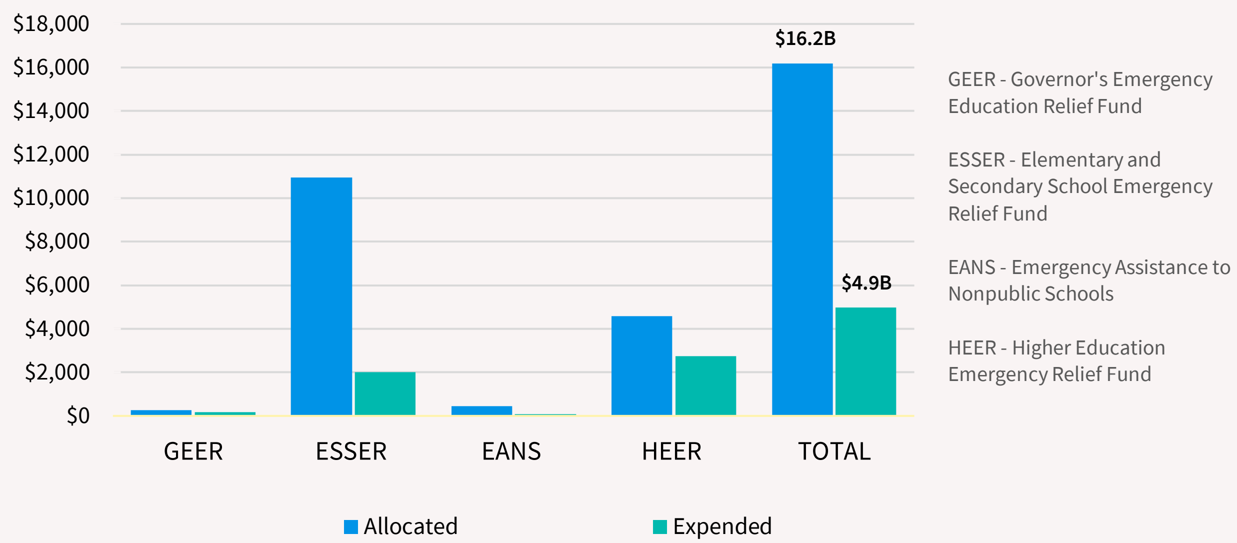
The end of the 2022 legislative session marks two years since the pandemic began with businesses shutting down, people being laid off from their jobs, and others taking their work home. Parents who could transition to a home work environment frequently had to simultaneously supervise their children's education or care for very young children. In late 2020 and 2021, stimulus payments helped to offset income loss to some extent, and the federal government provided a large infusion of funds to jumpstart a recovery, including support to education from PreK through post-secondary education. By the second half of 2021, schools resumed in-person learning, and families began receiving monthly Child Tax Credit payments.

However, full recovery has proven elusive. Not all child care centers reopened or reopened at full capacity due to staffing shortages and COVID-related shutdowns. Schools similarly struggled with staff shortages among teachers and support staff. Critical shortages of special educators, which predated the pandemic, became more acute. Support staff, such as bus drivers, are also in drastically short supply. As with early childhood education, pre-existing shortages were exacerbated by quarantine-related absences. At this point in the budget cycle, the governor and the Legislature have all proposed education budgets for FY 2022-23 that are less than those allocated for the current fiscal year. While the current allocation for early education, K-12, and postsecondary education includes some of the federal funds, much of the federal COVID relief to Florida's education system remains unallocated. (See *Figure 6*.)

In 2020 and 2021, the federal government passed three relief laws that infused the state's child care and education system with billions of supplemental dollars to support the needed response to the pandemic and address revenue drops. Between the 2020 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES), the 2020 Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), and the 2021 American Rescue Plan (ARPA), K-12 and higher education systems received $16.2 billion, with $3.3 billion allocated for early learning and child care. This $19.4 billion allotment represents 68 percent of the entire FY 2022-23 education budget of $28.4 billion proposed by the Senate.

Figure 6. Federal Covid Relief Significantly Bolstered Florida Education

Total Florida allocations for education funds across CARES, CRRSA, and ARP Acts of 2020 and 2021 (in millions)



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Across the three funds in the Education Stabilization Funds — CARES, CRRSAA and ARPA — $16.2 billion has been allocated to provide COVID relief, of which only $4.9 billion (30.8 percent) has been expended or encumbered as of Dec. 31, 2021. (See *Figure 6*.) As for CARES funds, which were allocated in 2020, 88.2 percent has been expended for elementary and secondary schools. Funding was also made available for non-public schools under the CRRSAA, but only 37 percent has been expended. There have been no expenditures or encumbrances of ARPA funds at the close of 2021.

In higher education, most of the federal COVID relief funding (89.7 percent) from the 2020 CARES fund was expended by the end of 2021. No expenditures of the $75 billion dollars in CRRSAA funds have been made to the Florida College System to date. Higher Education Emergency Relief funds, which combine CARES, CRRSAA and ARPA funds, were awarded directly to institutions in both the FCS and State University System (SUS). Sixty percent of these funds have been expended to date. (See *Figure 6,* above.)

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 for 4- and 5-year-old children. There is no income eligibility; 72 percent percent of eligible 4-year-old children in the state attend VPK, one of the highest participation rates in the country.[58] 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.[59] Three hours a day is hardly enough for robust, quality education for children. The amount Florida spends per child for high-quality, full-day preschool is $5,000 less than is required.[60]

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; most counties have waiting lists for participation. Even pre-pandemic, many Florida families were unable to access School Readiness vouchers to assist with the ever-increasing cost of child care. In FY 2020, there were 19,000 children on the waiting list.[61]

The pandemic has dramatically altered the landscape for child care in the state and the nation. The majority of Florida's centers shut their doors in spring of 2020 and then reopened with support of CARES Act dollars administered through the state, which prioritized serving children of first responders and also paid providers according to enrollment instead of attendance, girding against the worst predictions about the sector from early in the pandemic. However, child care advocates still express worry about the fiscal pressure due to drops in enrollment, which have yet to rebound and are hopeful the state continues to support providers in a flexible manner. The Division of Early Learning (DEL) will once again have to decide how best to distribute significant COVID response aid as the federal government begins to distribute the supplemental CRRSA Act ($635 million to Florida) and ARPA Discretionary and Supplemental childcare support dollars ($3.3 billion).

→ Budget

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK)

Table 6. Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Budget

VOLUNTARY PRE-KINDERGARTEN BUDGET				
		FY 2022-23 Budget Proposals		
	Current Year	**Governor**	**House**	**Senate**
Appropriation Amount	$408,568,112	$406,612,692	$408,607,569	$402,137,694
Difference from Current Year Budget		-$1,955,420	+$39,457	-$6,430,418
VPK Per-Pupil School Year Funding	$2,486	$2,486	$2,526	$2,486
Difference from Current Year Per-Pupil School Year Funding		0	+40	0

The House proposal for Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) increases the total allocation and the per-pupil funding level to $2,526, whereas the Senate version maintains the current year per-pupil funding at $2,486 for school year base student allocation yet decreases overall funding. The state's VPK enrollment was 146,132 in January 2022 and is expected to decrease by 17,944 at the end of the current school year. This is the second year in a row of declining enrollment due to the pandemic.[62]

The VPK program is funded entirely from general revenue funds. While the base allocation was kept level in the governor's proposal, it is still below the base student allocation in FY 2005-06, the program's first year.

School Readiness Program

Table 7. School Readiness Program Budget

SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM BUDGET				
		FY 2022-23 Budget Proposals		
	Current Year	**Governor**	**House**	**Senate**
Appropriation Amount	$938,635,276	$932,877,228	$932,877,228	$932,877,228
Difference from Current Year Budget		-$5,758,048	-$5,758,048	-$5,758,048

The House and Senate propose reducing the current allocation for the School Readiness Program. Between FY 2018-19 and FY 2020-21, funding for this program increased by $205 million, wholly through federal funding increases of the CCDBG. This was a welcome infusion for child care advocates, who have drawn attention to the program's long waiting lists and uneven provider quality. Both chambers' proposals include a $40 million allocation to increase provider pay. To improve access, both chambers also provide $30 million to increase eligibility for School Readiness from 150 percent of the federal poverty threshold to 200 percent as long as this does not exceed 86 percent of the state median income. Local Early Learning Coalitions must provide matching local funds to draw down this allocation. Both versions also provide $72 million to reduce the waiting list for School Readiness.

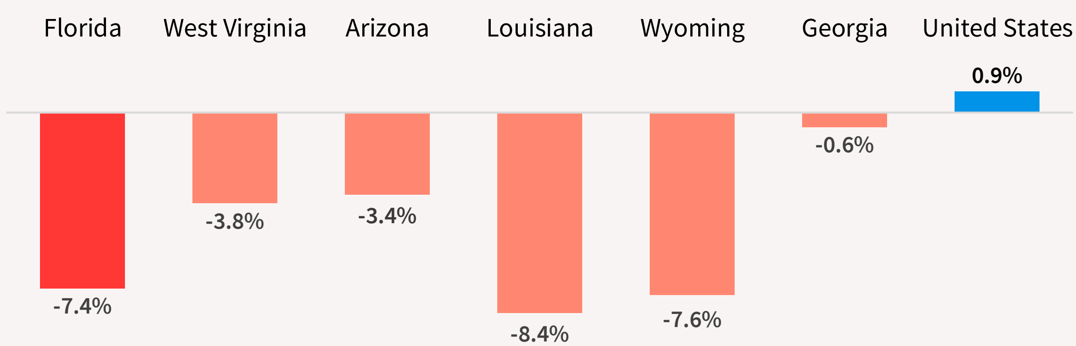
K-12 EDUCATION

→ Current Landscape

Providing 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. This funding shortage has significantly suppressed teacher salaries — Florida's average teacher pay ranked 49th in the nation in 2020.[63] Florida lawmakers have cut teacher pay more than any other state from 2009 to 2018. (See *Figure 7.)*

School enrollment is beginning to rebound from decreases during the pandemic, though growth is modest. For the 2022-23 school year, the state estimates that public school enrollment will increase by 52,111.32 full-time equivalents relative to the 2021 mid-year estimate. The slow growth is attributed to the participation in the newly expanded Family Empowerment Scholarships.[64]

Figure 7. Florida Has Cut Teacher Pay Over the Last Decade
Percent change in select state average K-12 teacher pay, inflation adjusted, FY 2011-2021



Source: Ranking of the States 2020 and Estimates of School Statistics 2021, NEA Research, National Education Association, April 2021.

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→ Budget

Table 8. K-12 Education Budget

K-12 EDUCATION BUDGET				
		FY 2022-23 Budget Proposals		
	Current Year	**Governor**	**House**	**Senate**
K-12 Total State Funding – FEFP	$12,173,070,268	$13,350,150,500	$13,336,104,134	$13,331,242,491
K-12 Total State Funding – Non-FEFP	$293,446,867	$225,372,939	$252,723,548	$294,188,078
K-12 Total Local Funding	RLE = $8,218,314,071 Millage = 1,754,404,499	RLE = $8,687,180,476 Millage = 1,856,083,952	RLE= $8,835,973,489 Millage = 1,754,404,499	RLE= $8,845,088,645 Millage = 1,888,021,898
K-12 Total Federal Funding	4.468	4.354	4.354	4.354
K-12 Per-pupil Spending	$4,264,606,313	$2,290,288,334	$2,296,233,909	$2,296,233,909

K-12 Base Student allocation	$7,795.07	$ 8,000.00	7,811.12	$8,110.67

** 2020-21 2nd calculation

The House and Senate budget proposals both:

- Increase the state's portion of the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) as well as the Base Student Allocation (BSA). BSA is the most flexible spending bucket for schools and the best measure for comparing year-to-year K-12 funding.

- Include an increase for the local K-12 contribution ($617.6 million by the House and $626.7 million by the Senate). The increase in the local funding is due to rising property values. However, the proposed millage rates are lower than the current fiscal year, which is a missed opportunity to increase funding had they maintained the current year millage rate.

- Include a decrease in allocations from federal funding sources. The House includes a $1.9 billion decrease, and the Senate a similar decrease in federal funding. One explanation is that, to date, policymakers have appropriated federal funding in the back-of-the-bill sections. Since the GAA total does not include these back-of-the-bill sections, the full scope of federal funding is not entirely captured in the main GAA sections or the total calculation (which excludes the back-of-the-bill). Finally, if policymakers carry forward federal pandemic-related relief dollars from the previous GAA, this will be included in the back of the bill.

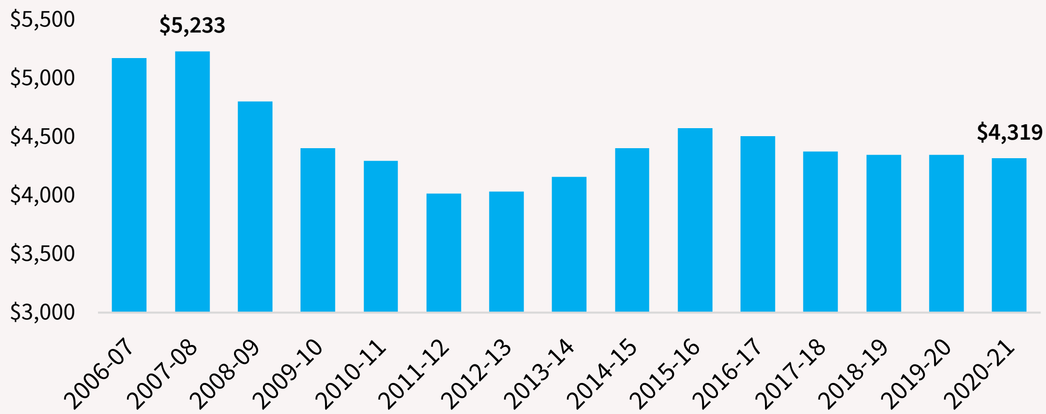
- Include funds for Mental Health Assistance. The House proposal allocates $120 million, while the Senate proposes an allocation of $140 million, an increase of $20 million over the current allocation. These funds would go toward mental health services provided at K-12 schools that are desperately needed considering the declining mental well-being of teens and young adults and increases in suicide attempts.[65,66]

It is noteworthy that the Senate version of the budget proposes a $5 million allocation to help Jefferson County transition from a district-run by a charter company to be once more a public school district governed by elected school board members.

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, the Senate's proposed $4,612 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 8*). Florida's state and local spending on K-12 education has yet to rebound to levels prior to the Great Recession of 2008-2009. However, the BSA funds do not include funding from CARES, CRRSA or ARPA, that are intended to help school districts to pay for COVID-related expenditures, make up for lost revenue, and provide services to address learning loss.

Figure 8. K-12 Base Student Allocation

Inflation Adjusted. 2020 dollars



Source: National Education Association.

Florida Policy Institute | floridapolicy.org

The House proposes $800 million for the Teacher Salary Increase Allocation, at least half of which has to be spent on full-time teacher salary increases to increase the minimum salary to $47,500, including certified PreK teachers who work in the schools. This is the same as current year funding. By contrast, the Senate has approved $600,000 for the same purpose. While Florida average teacher pay is now $49,102, average teacher pay overall ranked 49th in 2019-2020.[67] We need greater investment in our teachers to be able to recruit and retain K-12 faculty. Doing so would not only improve the quality of life for them and their families; it would promote stability in the workforce, which enhances the academic success of all students, especially children and youth of color who are disproportionately and adversely effected by teacher turnover.[68]

Hidden in a proposal that would already reduce the education budget by more than $2 billion over the current allocation, the “Putting Parents First Adjustment” in the House version intends to punish school districts that imposed mask mandates in defiance of a state ban on such mandates. The House recommends taking $200 million in funding from 12 districts with mask mandates and reallocating these funds among the remaining school districts. As all districts do, these districts did what they thought best to prioritize the health and safety of their students and employees, especially in the context of widespread student, staff and faculty absences as COVID once again peaked.

HIGHER EDUCATION

→ Current Landscape

Researchers have found that the more educated a state's populace is, the higher the median wage.[69,70] 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.[71] Investments in higher education also make sense at the community level: the larger the supply of highly-skilled workers, the more attractive the community is to high-wage employers.[72] Indeed, Florida's public higher education system charges relatively low tuition. Recently, U.S. New and World Report ranked Florida number 1, in part due to low tuition.[73] While actual appropriations have increased over time, Florida's educational appropriations per student decreased 11.6 percent between 2010 and 2020 in inflation adjusted dollars.[74]

As the pandemic took hold in early 2020, a tremendous amount of uncertainty clouded Florida's colleges and universities as they planned for the best path forward. The Education Estimating Conference estimated that enrollment for Florida's public colleges would again experience declines in enrollment 5.3 percent in FY 2020-21 and further declines are anticipated over the coming years.[75]

→ Budget

Florida College System

Table 9. Florida College System Budget

FLORIDA COLLEGE SYSTEM BUDGET				
		FY 2022-23 Budget Proposals		
	Current Year	**Governor**	**House**	**Senate**
Total State Support	$1,362,458,227	$1,359,998,227	$1,491,677,463	$1,342,660,850

The House proposed budget for the Florida College System (FCS) includes an increase in state funding, while the Senate version recommends a reduction compared to the current allocation. 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.[76]

The House proposal includes a $15 million allocation from General Revenue to the Open Door Grant program, which is intended to help students complete career high demand certification in career and technical education as well as programs in FCS. This is the same as the current year allocation.

Not included in the budget for state colleges is Higher Education Emergency Relief (HEERF) funds, which went directly to institutions of higher education in both the State University System and FCS. The total allocation of HEERF funds in Florida totals $4.6 billion, of which 60 percent have been expended to Florida colleges and universities.

State University System

Table 10. State University System (SUS) Budget

STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM BUDGET				
		FY 2022-23 Budget Proposals		
	Current Year	**Governor**	**House**	**Senate**
State University System (SUS) – State Funding Support	$4,845,952,728	$5,304,221,992	$5,434,302,630	$5,315,225,550

Both the House and Senate proposals include increases to state support for university operating expenses. These increases move Florida towards parity with pre-Great Recession of 2008-2009 levels.

Student Financial Aid

Table 11. Student Financial Aid Budget

STUDENT FINANCIAL AID BUDGET				
		FY 2022-23 Budget Proposals		
	Current Year	**Governor**	**House**	**Senate**
Bright Futures (Merit-based scholarships)	$623,231,360	$602,037,556*	$620,881,057	$620,881,057
Other Aid (Specialty scholarships, matches, and loans)	$359,234,226	$365,593,347	$370,544,659	$371,579,415
Total Student Financial Aid	$982,465,586	$967,630,903	$991,425,716	$992,460,472

*The Governor proposes $40M so that each Bright Future Student gets a $300 book allowance bonus in the back of the bill Section 11

The House and Senate budget proposals both offer increases in total financial awards of over more than 8 million dollars over the current allocation. Between the two, the proposal totals differ by slightly more than $1 million, with the Senate's being the greater of the two. Both the House and Senate agree on decreased allocations for Bright Futures, Florida's merit-based scholarships. Both chambers also propose increasing state financial aid, including the Benacquisto Scholarship for National Merit Scholars to $36.4 million.

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[77] like Florida's Bright Futures. Indeed, in its 23-year history, the share of Bright Futures grants going to Black students has never exceeded 7 percent.[78] As such, the continued emphasis on merit-based scholarships as they are currently awarded could be a further barrier to students with low income from the higher education system, adding yet another barrier to economic mobility and the shared prosperity of all Floridians.

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 Great Recession of 2008-09. 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.[79]

Education fixed-capital outlay funds are used to build, repair, and maintain public schools, colleges, and university buildings and pay for debt service for bonds sold in the past to raise building funds. 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 education capital projects totaling $12.1 billion; however, only one PECO bonding project has been approved since then.

→ Budget

Table 12. Education Facility Construction Budget

EDUCATION FACILITY CONSTRUCTION BUDGET		FY 2022-23 Budget Proposals		
	Current Year	**Governor**	**House**	**Senate**
Debt Service	$1,035,793,614	$1,072,935,022	$1,067,027,191	$1,067,027,191
Maintenance, Repair, Remodeling: Charter Schools	$182,864,353	$190,865,859	$195,768,743	$195,768,743
School Hardening Grant Program	$42,000,000	$42,000,000	$20,000,000	$42,000,000
Total Fixed Capital Outlay	$1,302,346,009	$1,546,100,000	$1,553,900,000	1,932,600,000

The House and Senate have continued the trend of opting not to leverage PECO funds to bond for education projects; no education bonded projects were proposed in either budget. The PECO Estimating Conference in January 2022 estimated that the state could appropriate $4.3 billion for school construction in FY 2022-23 if the state were to issue bonds with the PECO dollars.[80]

Considering the House and Senate proposals:

- Both chambers recommend increasing the total fixed capital outlay budget by $252 million (House) and $630 million (Senate), a large difference from the current year budget. The difference is mainly accounted for by the investment in a number of SUS capital projects — e.g., the Senate version has proposed funding for things like the West Palm Beach Global Center for Technology and Innovation (GCTI) for $100 million; USF Nursing Expansion ($33 million); and the FSU Health Center ($125 million). In both budgets, approximately $1.1 billion is earmarked to pay for debt service on bonding, a slight increase over the current year.

- The House and Senate propose continued funding for School Hardening, initiated after the Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School massacre.

- Both chambers propose funding only charter schools for maintenance, repair, and remodeling. Both include $195 million for maintenance and repair of charter schools without specifying any such funding for public schools, colleges, or universities. It should be noted that while school districts do use dedicated local funds for capital projects, the disparity is important to note given the extreme need for repair and maintenance of Florida's public schools.

House and Senate FY 2022-23 Budget Proposals:

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

→ Current Landscape

Florida continues to fall behind in promoting economic security and self-sufficiency for residents struggling to make ends meet. The erosion of the state's safety net leaves families experiencing hard times with few, if any, resources to meet their basic needs.

COVID-19 highlighted the inadequacy of the state's Reemployment Assistance (RA) program, commonly referred to as Unemployment Insurance (UI). Florida is among the states that provide the fewest unemployed workers with help for one of the shortest lengths of time and at one of the lowest benefit levels.

Florida's RA program has been broken for years, focusing more on reducing program costs than providing an adequate benefit for unemployed workers. The program was significantly scaled back in 2011. Since then, the program has ranked at or near the bottom on nearly every indicator of a robust program. In fact, Florida's recipiency rate, which looks at the proportion of jobless workers who actually receive benefits, is among the worst in the country.[81] This particularly disadvantages Floridians of color, who have an unemployment rate roughly twice that of the average for all workers.[82] However, neither the House nor Senate budget proposal funds comprehensive RA reforms.

Also putting a strain on residents is the lack of affordable housing in Florida. The state ranks 7th in the nation least affordable housing markets,[83] with only 28 affordable and available housing units for every 100 extremely low-income households.[84] Previous trust fund sweeps of the Sadowski Affordable Housing Trust Fund have 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 Fund to support other appropriations. However, in 2021, lawmakers approved a bill that will permanently suspend fund sweeps of the trust fund.

→ Budget

Table 13. General Government Budget

GENERAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET				
		FY 2022-23 Budget Proposals		
	Current Year	**Governor**	**House**	**Senate**
Appropriation Amount	$6,291,009,192	$5,303,800,000	$7,272,400,000	$6,672,400,000
Difference from Current Year Budget		-$987,209,192	$981,390,808	$381,390,808

Increasing Minimum Wages for State and Subcontracted Workers

State leaders are keeping their promise to speed up the timeline of minimum wage increases, bringing state workers to $15 well before the rest of the state must comply with Amendment 2 (2020).[85] This ballot measure, passed in 2020, raised the minimum wage for all Florida workers — public and private — to $10 per hour in 2021 and increases it by $1 each year until it reaches $15 in 2026.

During the last legislative session, state leaders raised the minimum wage for most full-time state workers to $13 per hour, anticipating Amendment 2's phase-in.[86] Both chambers propose wage increases for state workers in their FY 2022-23 proposals.

The provisions in the Senate's proposal, however, are much more generous and comprehensive than those in the House's. The Senate proposes bringing all state employees (full- and part-time) to $15 per hour in 2022, plus some subcontracted providers that receive state funding (e.g., home- and community-based care Medicaid service providers, VPK instructors, and some juvenile justice officers). The Senate also recommends allowing subcontracted workers to sue providers for noncompliance with the new pay law. At the same time, the House proposal has no such enforcement language. Finally, the Senate sets aside funds for agencies to account for wage compression. This is the indirect effect of raising minimum wages. As workers on the lowest end of the pay scale within an agency have their base pay increased (in this case, due to the minimum wage increase), their pay can become close to or equal to the pay of more senior employees or those with higher-level job titles. To retain employees and promote equity, employers often raise the wages of those non-minimum wage workers to account for this wage compression. Agencies might need to bring their non-minimum wage workers up in pay, given that those immediately below them on the pay scale would now be earning $15 per hour.

Instead of widespread minimum wage increases like the Senate proposes, the House offers uniform pay increases for all state workers — not just those paid the minimum wage — by 5.38 percent, to adjust for rising living costs. Additionally, the House proposes a smaller increase to $13 per hour and only for direct care staff of programs under the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) and Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA). While wage compression is not accounted for, the House calls on AHCA and APD to report the impact of these $13 increases on average direct care staff pay.

As the chambers negotiate their budgets, the House could match the Senate's proposal. However, the Senate's attempt at wage enforcement does not go far enough, because lawsuits are time-consuming, costly, and not feasible for most people earning at or near the minimum wage. Instead, the chambers should adopt a statewide wage enforcement entity, like a Department of Labor, to enforce wage and hour laws.

Reemployment Assistance

Florida's reemployment assistance (RA) program does not provide adequate support to hard-working Floridians who lose jobs through no fault of their own. The program provides one of the lowest benefit levels in the country, forcing applicants to wait a week before they qualify, capping aid at $275 a week, restricting the maximum number of weeks that a worker can get help to 23, and making it harder overall for people with low earnings to qualify. Although the influx of unemployment assistance applications during COVID-19 has shone a light on the program's insufficiencies, Florida's RA program has been riddled with these problems for over a decade.[87] Yet, except for reverting unexpended funds that were appropriated last year for modernization of RA technology back to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), neither the House nor Senate budget proposals include funding for comprehensive reforms to the RA program.

The House proposes to fund the RA program at $131 million, while the Senate proposes a more modest budget of $116 million. Neither budget purports to address the following ongoing issues with RA:

- the mandate that most households file their unemployment claims electronically;
- the limitation on the number of weeks that claimants can get assistance;
- the imposition of a wait week before eligible claimants are able to start getting assistance;
- excessive monetary eligibility requirements that make claimants ineligible for assistance;
- the lack of an alternative base period; and
- the need to increase the taxable wage base and tax rate to fully fund Florida's RA system.[88]

Additionally, neither the House nor Senate budget proposal includes funding for a much-needed analysis of the nature of unemployment assistance claims during COVID-19 and the extent to which unemployment assistance is meeting the need of struggling Floridians.[89] An FPI analysis suggests that the pandemic disproportionately impacts Floridians' ability to access assistance, particularly Black and Latina/o workers, workers in poor health, and those in the service industry.[90] According to DEO, less than half of all claims for unemployment assistance filed by Floridians during the pandemic have been approved: out of the 6.1 million unduplicated claims, only 2.6 million have been determined eligible as of February 14, 2022. Publicly available data published on DEO's dashboard about denied claims lacks the detail necessary to understand why Floridians are being denied benefits, how many are denied, and the reasons for denial.

Detailed data to inform state officials and the public about apparent inequities in Florida's UI program is critical to addressing unmet needs. To appropriately serve Floridians who have lost jobs during COVID-19, the state should be proactive about collecting, analyzing, and releasing detailed data. Having a better understanding of the program's impact is essential to increasing awareness among the public of common pitfalls in establishing eligibility and informing state officials who should reform laws or policies that are being wrongly applied or unnecessarily excluding eligible claimants.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

In their proposals, both the House and Senate overlook the predicament of 2.8 million SNAP participants in Florida whose food assistance was reduced after COVID-related increases to their monthly benefits ended in 2021.[91] (Some other states have either passed or are considering temporary state-funded supplements to SNAP to help ease the burden of loss of these enhancements on families.)[92] Because of these reductions, most Floridians who participate in SNAP are having to make do with significantly less benefits this year, despite rising food costs.

Factors that have resulted in smaller SNAP allotments include:

- **Loss of SNAP Emergency Allotments (EAs):** The Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 authorizes states to issue EAs to SNAP participants to supplement the family's SNAP benefits up to the maximum for a household of their size to alleviate the effects of the public health emergency during the pandemic. EAs, which are paid for in their entirety by the federal government, provide a minimum of $95 in SNAP to households every month.[93] However, EAs are only available to persons in states that have a state-declared health emergency.[94] Floridians participating in SNAP lost EAs last year after Florida did not extend its public health emergency past June 2021. In contrast, approximately 40 states continue to provide EAs through February 2022.[95] (For July 2021 alone, which was the last month that Florida issued EAs, approximately 283 million Floridians received an estimated $1.7 million in EAs).

- **End of the 15 Percent Increase in SNAP:** Floridians lost the automatic 15 percent per month increase in SNAP that was provided under the American Rescue Plan Act to help families with food costs during COVID. This increase, which was paid for by the federal government, amounted to about $28 per person every month in Florida.[96] However, it expired nationwide in October 2021.

Although USDA increased SNAP allotment levels in 2021 for the first time since 2006, this increase, which only amounts to about $8.38 per week per person, or roughly $1.20 per day, is not enough to make up for the reduction in SNAP that Floridians have experienced due to the end of COVID enhancements.[97]

In addition, neither the House nor Senate budgets explicitly recommend increased transportation expense funding for SNAP recipients in the Employment and Training (E&T) program.

Although waived during the pandemic, most SNAP 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.[98]

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 anything but minimal: 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.

Food Deserts

The House proposes $3 million and the Senate proposes $2.5 million in funding for Feeding Florida, which supports the state's network of food banks. The House also recommends $500,000 for Feeding Florida to administer the Florida Children's Initiative Food Security Project,[99] which engages children and their families in physical fitness programs, provides nutrition education and cooking lessons, expands community gardening, and helps neighborhood youth to develop and operate businesses for growing, packaging, marketing, and selling fresh produce in several food desert communities. Similarly, the Senate proposes $600,000 in additional funding for the Florida Children's Initiative Food Security Project and Nature Deficit Project. The Senate appropriation for Feeding Florida includes a mandate that 30 percent of all food commodities distributed by Feeding Florida must be fresh Florida products.

The budget proposals also include $8.3 million in federal money to fund emergency feeding organizations.

The Senate proposal includes $250,000 to fund the United Against Poverty Member Share Grocery Program, which aims to provide fresh produce and proteins to families in need in Indian River, St. Lucie, and Orange Counties.[100]

Lastly, the House and Senate recommend $2 million and $2.5 million, respectively, for Farm Share, which distributes food to families in need, food entities and community partners. This is a reduction from the $5 million appropriated in the current year budget.

Economic Development

The state's economic development programs have been contested in recent years, with the governor, House, and Senate proposing widely varying funding levels — and in some cases, recommending that funding for certain programs be eliminated — during each of the past few legislative sessions.

The biggest difference between the budget proposals is in the allocations for the Job Growth Grant fund, which is a program that provides discretionary funds that the governor can use toward targeting job training projects or for public infrastructure. The value of this program has been debated since it was established in a 2017 special session and funding has fluctuated significantly from year to year. The governor's proposal of $100 million — paid for through ARPA funds — would be the highest appropriation in recent years. However, as has happened each year, the House and Senate proposals vary significantly with the House proposing $25 million and the Senate proposing no funding at all for this program. The Job Growth Grant fund received $50 million in the current year budget, also funded through ARPA.

Enterprise Florida, the state's public-private economic development partnership, is funded at $12 million across all of the FY 2022-23 budget proposals. This program has also been a source of contention, facing severe scrutiny over its use of public funds. Between FY 2018-19 and FY 2020-21, Enterprise Florida had been funded at $16 million. Funding was reduced to $14.4 million in the current year budget, and the proposals for FY 2022-23 would reduce funding even further.

The governor, House, and Senate all propose $50 million for Visit Florida (the state's tourism and marketing agency) for FY 2022-23, , which is a reduction of $4 million from the current year budget. For the current year, the Legislature used $25 million in ARPA funding for Visit Florida. Visit Florida was slated to "sunset" by July 1, 2020, but legislation passed in 2020 (SB 362) extended its authority until October 2, 2023.

Affordable Housing

During the 2021 session, policymakers enacted significant changes via SB 2512 to the Sadowski Affordable Housing Trust Fund, which is funded through documentary stamp tax revenue. The trust fund received about 24 percent of documentary stamp tax collections in prior years. However, over nearly two decades, lawmakers have "swept," or diverted funds away from Sadowski to be used to fund other parts of the state budget. This new law reduces the amount of documentary stamp tax revenue earmarked for the Sadowski trust fund by half (reducing the distribution to 9.7 percent); however, at the same, it makes Sadowski funding recurring, meaning that it will be funded every year and that future sweeps will be averted. Although preventing future funding sweeps is notable progress, especially given that more than $2 billion has been swept from the

Sadowski fund since FY 2002-03, SB 2512's significant reduction in the amount of revenue dedicated to affordable housing essentially enacts a permanent sweep of the trust fund.

Table 14. Sadowski Housing Trust Fund

SADOWSKI HOUSING TRUST FUND				
		FY 2022-23 Budget Proposals		
	Current Year	**Governor**	**House**	**Senate**
Local Government Housing Trust Fund	$62,500,000	$220,526,178	$202,900,000	$209,475,000
State Housing Trust Fund	$146,700,000	$94,967,332	$65,200,000	$128,250,000
Total Funding Sweeps	$0	$0	$0	$0
Total Housing Support	$209,200,000	$315,493,510	$268,100,000	$337,725,000

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 State Apartment Incentive Loan (SAIL) Program, which is also administered by FHFC and provides low-interest loans to developers for affordable housing development.

The Sadowski Coalition estimates that full funding in FY 2020-21 would have resulted in more than 30,000 jobs and $4.4 billion in positive economic impact.[101]

House and Senate FY 2022-23 Budget Proposals:

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 is of the utmost importance. Such investments are particularly important in South Florida, where climate equity and gentrification are growing issues of concern.[102] The rising sea levels have made higher elevation properties more desirable to investors and developers, putting families with low income who reside in these regions at risk of being displaced.[103]

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."[104] Not only do natural disasters impact tourism, but they also cause economic and physical devastation within impacted communities.

In March 2021, Governor DeSantis appointed a new Chief Science Officer (CSO) who will address, among other things, longstanding harmful algae blooms like red tide and beach erosion. Advocates contend the previous CSO's Blue-Green Algae Task Force recommendations were largely ignored due to industry group pressures.[105] Recently, advocates have expressed concerns about climate change's destruction and pollution of Florida's major waterways[106] and the lack of a top state official[107] to assess the deleterious effects it will continue to have on the state if swift action is not taken.

The ASCE gave Florida an overall grade of "C" in its 2021 Infrastructure Report Card (the same as four years ago), with even lower grades on indicators like coastal areas, dams, levees, schools, and stormwater.[108] Moreover, while the governor claims that "Florida has one of the best transportation systems in the country,"[109] the reality is that the state is in dire need of increased funding and long-term planning, especially regarding 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.

Table 15. Natural Resources/Environment/Growth Management/Transportation Budget

NATURAL RESOURCES/ENVIRONMENT/GROWTH MANAGEMENT/TRANSPORTATION BUDGET				
		FY 2022-23 Budget Proposals		
	Current Year	**Governor**	**House**	**Senate**
Appropriation Amount	$14,657,343,198	$14,863,800,000	$17,030,600,000	$17,915,800,000
Difference from Current Year Budget		+$206,456,802	+$2,373,256,802	+$3,258,456,802

Transportation

The Senate and House propose $12.2 billion and $12 billion, respectively, for the Department of Transportation (DOT), funded through the State Transportation Trust Fund. Compared to current year funding of $9.5 billion, nearly $11 billion is recommended for the Transportation Work Program to fund DOT's Five-Year Work Program. From that allocation, $9 million is included for transportation projects in municipalities. Section 152 of the FY 2021-22 budget — the "back of the bill" — allocated $2 billion in ARPA funds for the State Transportation Trust Fund, with $1.75 billion focused on projects in the Work Program that had been delayed or deleted due to COVID-19.

Passage of a significant bill has changed the state's transportation program landscape. Senate Bill 100, which was signed into law during the 2021 legislative session, repealed the controversial Multi-Use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (M-CORES) program. Passed in 2019, M-CORES was 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. The toll road program had been critiqued by environmental and community advocates, as the more than 330 miles of proposed toll roads would endanger over 52,800 acres of undeveloped land, including sensitive animal habitats as well as critical ecosystems such as wetlands, springs, and aquifer recharge areas, with questionable economic benefit to rural communities.

While SB 100 eliminated the M-CORES program, it did not eliminate all three of the toll roads. Of the three proposed toll roads only one was fully eliminated. Two still remain, yet on a different timetable, and if developed, will pose significant environmental and economic risks. The bill includes extending the Florida Turnpike and provides $20 million to expand rural roads with a high volume of truck traffic.

Disaster Planning & Recovery

The Senate and House propose a budget of almost $1.6 billion in federal and state funding for Emergency Management (EM) to provide disaster relief and recovery, roughly the same as the current funding level. Most of this appropriation would come from the federal government.

Environment

Overall, the House and Senate proposals reflect an eye toward stronger investment in environmental spending, as they include increased funding in many areas. Cuts in other areas persist, but most are nominal and, in some cases, may be indicative of reallocation of interdepartmental resources rather than true, significant cuts. That being said, most jumps in Florida Forever and Everglades funding on the Senate side are tied to a controversial, fast-tracked conforming bill — SB 2508 — that many advocates and Governor DeSantis oppose for its implications on land management and the South Florida Waste Management Division's ability to complete restoration projects. Conversely, some House additions are tied to HB 1177,[110] a welcomed initiative that would require greater oversight over private businesses' waste disposal. Thus, the budget reconciliation process will be pivotal to environmental funding this year.[111]

Investing fully in all 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. This is especially crucial for the tourism industry's recovery in the wake of COVID-19, which has rebounded on the domestic front but not among overseas tourists.[112]

Compared to current year levels, both the House and Senate significantly increase funding to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), adding $612 million (a 28 percent increase) and $884 million (a 40 percent increase), respectively. The DEP administers most of the vital environmental activities in the state, including Everglades restoration and protection, Florida Forever/land conservation, state park operations, preserving Florida's coastlines, mitigating pollution, and monitoring air and water resources.

Notably, while the House proposes adding 46 net positions, the Senate proposes cutting 28 net positions, despite recommending a much higher increase to the DEP budget. This could be to accommodate the $15-per-hour minimum wage boosts the Senate is proposing for all state workers, plus proposed regulatory restructuring under SB 2508.

Most of the added House positions are for Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (including the Resilient Florida project) and State Park Operations. These additions are coupled with a major cut to Water Resource Management positions, so this may simply reflect reallocation of funding within the DEP. However, the House explicitly adds six new positions and $136 million for Waste Management, mostly contingent on the passage of HB 1177.

Everglades Restoration

The Senate proposes increasing Everglades funding significantly by $412 million (an 84-percent jump), while the House recommends cutting funding by $30 million (a 6-percent reduction). This significant Senate funding, however, is primarily tied to SB 2508. The House cut likely reflects the fact that federal ARPA funds were used for this category in the current fiscal year. The Everglades remains one of the most endangered natural resources, despite nearly one in three Floridians relying on it for their water supply.[113] Governor DeSantis has made supporting this vital area a key priority.

State Parks

The House adds $157 million and six positions for State Park Operations. Most of this added funding is dedicated to addressing backlogged improvements to state park facilities. The House states this represents the "highest level of funding for these projects in history."[114]

Florida Forever

Both the House and Senate recommend a moderate funding cut to the Florida Forever program. The Senate would reduce current funding by 1 percent, while the House and Governor both propose decreases to $100 million (a 2-percent cut). Florida Forever is a critical program that allows the state to acquire and preserve ecologically important land and prevent future environmental problems. It officially began in 2001 after landmark legislation (Preservation 2000) authorized $300 million in bonds for 10 years to support "the largest land acquisition program of its kind in the United States." Since then, 870,000 acres of conservation land have been managed by the program.[115] Additional legislation, like 2014's Amendment 1, designated new funding from the documentary stamp tax[116] and expanded the duration of Florida Forever's bonds through 2040.

Table 16. Florida Forever Program Budget

FLORIDA FOREVER PROGRAM BUDGET				
		FY 2022-23 Budget Proposals		
	Current Year	**Governor**	**House**	**Senate**
Appropriation Amount	$101,998,100	$100,000,000	$100,000,000	$101,021,968
Difference from Current Year Budget		- $1,998,100	- $1,998,100	- $976,132

Funding was appropriated in full until 2008, when it was then significantly reduced or eliminated. Strong advocacy has reversed this trend, with funding peaks of $101 million in FY 2018-19, $100 million in FY 2020-21, and $102 million in the FY 2021-22 budget. (See *Figure 7*.). The chambers' minimums of $100 million meet the floor that funding advocates have called for in recent years, yet still fall short of the $300 million in funding called for in the 2001 legislation. To address this, bills in both chambers have been introduced in the 2022 session that would extend Florida Forever bonds through 2054, limit sweeps from program funds into other areas of the budget, and set annual funding from $100 million to $350 million.[117] Similar proposals did not move in 2021.[118]

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

The Senate would cut Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) funds by $10.3 million (a 2-percent decrease), while the House would increase funding by $23.1 million (a 5-percent increase) and add 27 net positions. Curiously, the Senate's proposed cuts occur alongside 10 new FWC positions, primarily for Habitat and Species Conservation. The House's new positions are also for Habitat and Species Conservation; however, they are primarily for Fish, Wildlife, and Boating Law Enforcement.

For the past 23 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.[119]

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