

Freedom First Budget

Statewide Overview and Taxes

Q: How does the Governor's Fiscal Year 2022-23 recommended budget compare to the current year?

- The Freedom First Budget is \$99.7 billion. This is \$2 billion less than the current year \$101.7 billion budget.
- The General Revenue portion of the budget is \$37 billion, which is 1.6 percent higher than the current General Revenue budget of \$36.5 billion.

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

- \$10.6 billion in unallocated General Revenue
- \$3.0 billion in the Budget Stabilization Fund
- \$1.7 billion in unallocated Trust Funds
- **\$15.3 billion in Total Reserves**

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

- There are 114,007 state positions in the Freedom First Budget. This is 250 more FTE than in the Fiscal Year 2021-22 budget.

Q: What trust fund sweeps are included in the Freedom First Budget?

- The Freedom First Budget sweeps \$78 million in surplus funds:
 - \$30 million from the Inland Protection Trust Fund at the Department of Environmental Protection
 - \$5 million from the Financial Institutions' Regulatory Trust Fund at the Department of Financial Services
 - \$5 million from the Regulatory Trust Fund at the Department of Financial Services
 - \$9 million from the Administrative Trust Fund at the Department of Children and Families
 - \$10 million from the Grants and Donations Trust Fund at the Department of Health
 - \$5 million from the Medical Quality Assurance Trust Fund at the Department of Health
 - \$1 million from the Public Employees Relations Commission (PERC) Trust Fund at the Department of Management Services
 - \$3 million from the Hotel and Restaurant Trust Fund at the Department of Business and Professional Regulation
 - \$10 million from the Professional Regulation Trust Fund at the Department of Business and Professional Regulation

Q: After 11 years of actuarial surpluses ended in 2008, the FRS Pension Plan now has been underfunded for thirteen consecutive years. As of July 1, 2021, the plan's liabilities exceeded its assets by \$34.7 billion, translating into a funded ratio of 83.4 percent. How does the Governor's budget address this deficit?

- For the past two fiscal years, the Governor recommended and the Legislature agreed to fully fund both the normal cost and the unfunded actuarial liability at an additional cost to the state.
- The Freedom First Budget again implements the recommendations of the independent actuary and fully funds both the normal cost and the unfunded actuarial liability by increasing required employer contributions by \$176 million, or 3.8 percent.

Q: Does the Governor's budget recommend any changes to the retirement benefits offered by the Florida Retirement System?

- The Freedom First Budget increases the employer contribution to the investment accounts of employees participating in the FRS Investment Plan by three percent of the member's salary to ensure that these employees are better positioned financially during their retirement.
- This increase raises annual contributions to employee retirement accounts by \$250 million, representing a 65 percent increase over the current contribution level.

Education

Early Learning

Q: What is the budget for early learning?

- The budget includes more than \$1.4 billion in funding for our state's youngest learners.

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

- The budget includes a total of more than \$406 million for Florida's VPK program. This investment maintains the base student allocation for the school year and summer programs to \$2,486 per student and \$2,122 per student, respectively. VPK will prepare approximately 158,000 four- and five-year-olds for kindergarten.

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

- The budget maintains funding for the following early learning initiatives:
 - T.E.A.C.H. – \$10 million for early childhood teacher scholarships;
 - Help Me Grow – \$1.8 million to connect children and families with information, resources, and developmental services to enhance health, behavior, and learning in the development of young children;
 - Teacher Training – \$3 million for statewide professional development to improve child care instructor quality; and
 - Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) – \$3.9 million to deliver high quality School Readiness curriculum directly to parents so they may strengthen the cognitive and early literacy skills of at-risk children.

Q: Is the funding maintained for the School Readiness Program that was provided in Fiscal Year 2021-22 for initiatives that allowed additional students to be served and rewarded providers that participated in program assessments and implemented quality improvement strategies?

- Yes, the budget maintains funding provided in Fiscal Year 2021-22 for the following initiatives:
 - \$72 million for the School Readiness Program to serve students;
 - \$100 million provided in federal funds to increase eligible early learning coalitions' provider reimbursement rates; and
 - \$40 million for performance funding for all school readiness providers that participate in program assessment and quality improvement strategies.

K-12 Public Education

Q: Does the budget maintain the funding provided in Fiscal Year 2021-22 for salary increases for Florida's teachers?

- The Governor's proposed budget increases the funding provided to increase teacher salaries from \$550 million to \$600 million.
 - Through the existing program, this will provide an additional:
 - \$40 million in funding to allow school districts to continue raising the minimum teacher salary to the goal of \$47,500 or the highest level achievable through the funding appropriated; and
 - \$10 million is appropriated to raise the salaries of other eligible Florida teachers and instructional personnel.

Q: Does the \$1,000 educator bonus include costs associated with FICA?

- Yes, the bonus includes both the employee and employer's shares of FICA to ensure our hardworking educators receive a true \$1,000 bonus.

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

- The budget invests a record \$23.9 billion in total funding for the FEFP. This results in a per-student funding amount of \$8,000, an increase of \$189 over the Fiscal Year 2021-22 second calculation.

Q: How does the Governor's budget consider the required local effort in the FEFP?

- The required local millage rate is maintained at the Fiscal Year 2021-22 statewide level of 3.606.

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

- The Governor's budget recommends an increase of \$124 in the Base Student Allocation (BSA) over Fiscal Year 2021-22.

Q: What is the Governor's recommended budget for the FEFP compared to?

- The Governor's recommended Fiscal Year 2022-23 budget compares to the latest official calculation for Fiscal Year 2021-22.

Q: How does the Freedom First Budget attain historic \$8,000 per student funding?

- The Freedom First Budget invests an historic \$23.9 billion in total funding to serve the projected 2.98 million students, resulting in a per student funding amount of \$8,000.

- Under Governor DeSantis' leadership, the Department of Education issued emergency orders in Fiscal Year 2020-21 holding school districts' funding harmless, regardless of student enrollment decreases.
- The average funds per FTE in the final calculation of Fiscal Year 2020-21 without DOE Emergency Orders is \$7,769. The additional funding resulting from the Emergency Orders totaled \$265 per student.

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

- Yes, the budget provides an increase of \$20 million, for a total of \$140 million, in funding for the mental health allocation in the FEFP.

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

- Yes, the budget includes the following safety initiatives:
 - \$210 million, an increase of \$30 million, for the safe schools component of the FEFP;
 - \$140 million, an increase of \$20 million, for the mental health allocation in the FEFP;
 - \$6.5 million is maintained for the Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program that will be used to certify and train school guardians and provide a one-time stipend of \$500;
 - \$5.5 million is maintained for the Youth Mental Health Awareness and Assistance Training;
 - \$4.15 million, an increase of \$3.5 million, is provided for the Florida Safe Schools Assessment Tool;
 - \$3 million is maintained to continue providing a centralized integrated data repository and data analytics resources to improve access to timely, complete and accurate information integrating data from: social media; the Department of Children and Families; the Department of Law Enforcement; the Department of Juvenile Justice; and local law enforcement;
 - \$42 million is maintained for public school hardening grants; and
 - \$6.4 million is maintained to continue providing school districts' access to a mobile panic alert system that is capable of connecting multiple first responder agencies.

Q: Does the budget provide funding for the Schools of Hope program?

- The budget includes a one-year pause of the \$40 million in recurring base funding. This proposal would allow the initiative to use the remaining amount of approximately \$160 million in carry forward funding for the Schools of Hope program.
- The Governor supports the continuation of the Schools of Hope program and believes carry forward funds are sufficient to support current and impending projects.

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

- The budget maintains \$4 million in funding to hire school safety officers, enhance safety measures, upgrade equipment facilities and technology, and increase security services to ensure children at Florida Jewish Day Schools can learn in a safe environment. This funding will be available to all eligible Florida Jewish Day Schools.

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

- Yes, the budget maintains the \$10 million in funding provided in Fiscal Year 2021-22 to continue providing professional development and fund costs associated with training for teachers to earn educator certificates or industry certifications in computer science. The initiative also provides bonuses to teachers who earned an educator certificate or industry certification who are teaching computer science courses.

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

- Yes, the budget maintains \$500,000 in funding to continue the Florida Civics and Debate Initiative. The initiative will create and expand existing speech and debate programs with a focus on civic education.

Higher Education

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

- The budget includes state operating funding for Florida's higher education system of \$1.3 billion for Florida colleges, and \$2.7 billion for Florida universities.
- The budget also maintains Fiscal Year 2021-22 funding for the Florida Postsecondary Academic Library Network to provide essential library services to Florida College System and State University System institutions.
 - A total of \$20.8 million, is allocated to provide students with e-resources, technical support, distance learning, and more. \$9 million is provided to Florida colleges and \$11.8 million to Florida universities,

Q: Does the budget include any tuition increases?

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

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

- Yes, the budget maintains performance funding to encourage Florida’s career technical centers, Florida College System institutions, and the State University System institutions.
- The budget includes performance funding in the following areas:
 - A total of \$6.5 million in funding for district workforce programs to be allocated based on students earning industry certifications in high-demand areas;
 - A total of \$14 million in funding for state colleges to be allocated based on students earning industry certifications in high-demand areas;
 - A total of \$25 million for state colleges, through the 2+2 Student Success Incentive Fund and Work Florida Student Success Incentive Fund; and
 - A total of \$560 million in funding for the State University System. Performance will be based on 10 metrics including: percent of graduates employed or continuing education, average wages of employed graduates, and graduation rates.

Q: What will the per-institution award be for the Workforce Development Capitalization Incentive Grant Program?

- As the Workforce Development Capitalization Incentive Grant Program is a competitive grant, there are not per-institution allocations. School districts and Florida College System institutions will apply to the State Board of Education, which will then determine the award amount.

Q: Does the Governor’s budget include funding for the Open Door Grant Program?

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

Q: Does the Governor’s budget include funding for the Pathways to Career Opportunities Grant Program?

- The budget includes \$15 million, an increase of \$5 million, for the Governor’s Pathways to Career Opportunities Grant Program to establish or expand pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs for high school and college students.

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

- \$16.96 million in operating funds to Bethune-Cookman University.
- \$7.4 million in operating funds to Edward Waters College.
- \$7 million in operating funds to Florida Memorial University.
- \$90.3 million in operating funds to Florida A&M University.

Q: Does the Governor’s budget include funding for the Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute?

- Yes, the budget includes \$30.8 million, an increase of \$20.2 million, for the Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute to continue providing research and education related to cancer.

Student Financial Aid and Assistance

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

- The budget provides \$116 million for the Effective Access to Student Education (EASE) Grants, which will provide approximately 41,000 eligible private school students with \$2,841 in tuition assistance.

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

- The budget includes funding for the following state scholarship programs:
 - Florida Student Assistance Grant – Public Full and Part Time: \$236.7 million
 - Florida Student Assistance Grant – Private: \$22.9 million
 - Florida Student Assistance Grant – Postsecondary: \$6.6 million
 - Florida Student Assistance Grant – Career Education: \$3.2 million
 - The maximum award of the above four Florida Student Assistance Grants is \$3,260.
 - Children and Spouses of Deceased or Disabled Veterans: \$12.2 million
 - Florida Work Experience: \$1.6 million
 - Rosewood Family Scholarships: \$256,747
 - Florida Farmworker Scholarship Program: \$273,931
 - Honorably Discharged Graduate Assistance Program: \$1 million
 - Randolph Bracy Ocoee Scholarship Program: \$305,000
 - Dual Enrollment Scholarship: \$15.5 million

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

- The budget includes \$602 million for the Bright Futures Scholarship Program to fund the projected student enrollment.

- Funding ensures the Florida Academic Scholars award will continue to cover 100 percent of tuition and fees and the Florida Medallion Scholars award will continue to cover 75 percent of tuition and fees for qualifying students, for all semesters, including summer.
 - However, a Florida Medallion Scholar enrolled in an associate degree program at a Florida College System institution is eligible for an award equal to the amount necessary to pay 100 percent of tuition and fees.
- Funding ensures Gold Seal Vocational Scholars awards and Gold Seal CAPE Scholars awards will continue to be awarded to eligible students enrolled in a career education or a certificate program.
- Additionally, the budget provides \$40 million from the State Fiscal Recovery Fund to provide a \$300 stipend for each fall and spring semester for Florida Academic Scholars to cover the costs of textbooks and college-related expenses.

Q: Is the Governor recommending any new scholarships or financial assistance programs?

- Yes. The budget includes \$5 million in funding to establish the Law Enforcement Academy Scholarship Program. Scholarship funding is awarded to cover the cost of law enforcement academies for prospective officers.
- \$1 million is also included to establish the Out-of-State Law Enforcement Equivalency Reimbursement initiative to cover the cost of the State Officer Certification Exam fee and any necessary equivalency training program for law enforcement officers who relocate to Florida.

Education Infrastructure

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

- The August 2021 Public Education Capital Outlay Estimating Conference identified the cash amount available for appropriation from the PECO Trust Fund for Fiscal Year 2022-23 to be \$386.5 million.
- The PECO program addresses educational facility construction and fixed capital outlay needs for school districts, state colleges, state universities, and other public education programs.
- The budget includes more than \$428.5 million in funding for capital initiatives funded through PECO and other sources:
 - **School Safety Grants**
 - \$42 million for school safety grants provided to school districts to assist with costs associated with improving the physical security of K-12 school buildings.

- **Special Facility Construction**
 - \$85 million contingency fund to cover increasing costs related to Special Facility Construction projects for Baker, Bradford, Calhoun, Jackson, Levy, and Okeechobee counties, so these important projects can be completed regardless of rising costs from inflation.
- **Maintenance**
 - \$190.9 million for public charter school maintenance;
 - This funds the necessary infrastructure for charter schools without utilizing any of the school districts' local funds.
 - \$69.3 million for maintenance at the state colleges;
 - \$25 million to preserve, refurbish, and enhance Miami Dade College's Freedom Tower, a symbol of freedom and democracy.
 - \$8.1 million for lab school maintenance;
 - \$3.2 million for the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind maintenance; and
 - \$5 million for public broadcasting stations to correct health and safety issues and building deficiencies, and to complete renovations at public broadcasting stations.

Q: Does the budget provide bonding authority for educational facilities?

- No, the budget does not provide bonding authority for educational facilities. All education facility projects are recommended to be funded on a cash-basis.

Q: Does the budget include funding for Research Developmental Schools' (lab schools) facility needs?

- Yes, lab schools are traditional K-12 schools that, like charter schools, cannot levy taxes. The budget includes a total of \$8.1 million in capital outlay funding for all lab schools.

Environment

Q: What is included in the budget for protecting Florida’s environment and improving water quality?

- The budget invests more than \$4.4 billion for the protection of Florida’s pristine natural resources. This includes the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Public Service Commission and Department of Citrus.

Q: What is included in the budget to reach the Governor’s goal of \$2.5 billion investment in Everglades and water resources over four years?

- The budget includes more than \$980 million for Everglades restoration and protection of water resources. This level of funding over four years will result in a \$2.5 billion investment. This includes:
 - \$660 million for Everglades Restoration;
 - \$195 million for targeted water quality improvements, including TMDLs;
 - \$40 million for an Alternative Water Supply grant program;
 - \$50 million for Springs projects; and
 - \$35 million for water quality monitoring and to combat harmful algal blooms including blue-green algae and red tide.

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

- The budget includes \$195 million for targeted water quality improvements:
 - \$125 million for the wastewater grant program for projects to construct, upgrade or expand wastewater facilities, to provide advanced wastewater treatment and connecting septic tanks to sewer systems are prioritized.
 - \$50 million will focus specifically on achieving the Department of Environmental Protection’s scientific nutrient reduction goals, called Total Maximum Daily Loads, as part of the plans set forth in adopted Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs).
 - \$20 million for wastewater and storm water projects that address water quality impairments and coral reef restoration in Biscayne Bay.
- On top of this investment, the budget includes \$50 million for projects to restore Florida’s world-renowned springs.

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

- The budget provides more than \$660 million for Everglades Restoration. This funding includes:
 - \$459 million for Everglades Restoration, including the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, C-43 Reservoir and Restoration Strategies.

- \$69 million for the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir project.
- \$50 million for projects in the Lake Okeechobee Watershed.
- \$83 million for dispersed water management and public private partnerships to provide additional water storage.

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

- The budget includes more than \$35 million to specifically address algae blooms and red tide, including:
 - \$20 million for innovative technologies and short-term solutions to address algae blooms. This includes the emergency red tide grant program to help local governments to clean up their beaches and coastal areas to minimize the impacts of red tide to residents and visitors.
 - \$4.2 million for the FWC Center for Red Tide and to support the Harmful Algal Bloom Task Force.
 - \$10.8 million for increased water quality monitoring, a water quality public information portal, and to support the Blue-Green Algae Task Force to focus on expediting progress toward reducing adverse impacts of blue-green algae blooms.
- Additionally, the budget invests \$195 million for targeted water quality improvements and \$660 million for Everglades Restoration, including \$125 million for continued investment in the C-43 reservoir, which will provide more than 55 billion gallons of water storage east of Lake Okeechobee. These projects will help reduce nutrient loading and provide critical water storage.

Q: How does the budget reflect recommendations of the Blue Green Algae Task Force?

- \$195 million for targeted water quality improvements
- \$10.8 million for increased water quality monitoring
- \$15 million for innovative technologies to address algae blooms
- \$5 million for red tide response

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

- The budget provides \$40 million for an alternative water supply grant program to help communities plan for and implement vital conservation, reuse and other alternative water supply projects.
- DEP will engage local governments, industry, citizens and other stakeholders through a targeted education and outreach campaign that focuses on the importance of conservation and reuse efforts and encourage Floridians to implement these efforts in their homes, businesses and communities.

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

- The budget contains \$100 million for the Florida Forever Program, including:
 - \$75 million for Florida Forever through DEP's Division of State Lands
 - \$15 million for the Florida Communities Trust component of Florida Forever for funding to local governments and eligible non-profit environmental organizations for the acquisition of community-based parks, open space and greenways that further outdoor recreation and natural resource protection needs.
 - \$10 million for the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP), which provides competitive recreational grants to local governments for the acquisition and/or development of land for public outdoor recreation.
 - In addition, springs protection and water quality improvement projects may include land acquisition to protect water resources.

Q: How does the budget address resiliency?

- The budget provides \$550 million for planning and implementation of resiliency projects to adapt to flooding and sea level rise, in addition to protection of coral reef health.
- Coastal protection projects, include:
 - \$50 million for beach restoration projects
 - \$3 million for removal of tires and other waste currently posing a threat to coral reefs
 - \$1.3 million for Florida's Coastal Zone Management Program

Q: Why doesn't the Freedom First Budget appropriate the documentary stamp revenue that is distributed into the Resilient Florida Trust Fund?

- The Freedom First Budget appropriates an additional \$500 million from the State Fiscal Recovery Fund, for a total of \$1 billion, for statewide resiliency projects.
- Due to State Fiscal Recovery Funds being required to be obligated by December 2024 and spent by December 2026, the Freedom First Budget prioritizes these funds for approved resilience projects, which will allow the documentary stamp revenue distributions to grow in the Resilient Florida Trust Fund for future projects.

Q: Does the Freedom First Budget include money for water storage south of Lake Okeechobee?

- The budget includes \$277 million for several water storage projects, many of these around Lake Okeechobee, which will collectively provide nearly 190 billion gallons of water storage once completed. Examples of these projects include:

- \$125 million to continue the C-43 Reservoir, which will provide 55 billion gallons of water storage to protect estuaries
- \$83 million for dispersed water management, which will provide more than 24 billion gallons of water storage when projects are operational
- \$69 million for the EAA Reservoir, which will provide a minimum of 78 billion gallons of water storage when complete

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

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

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

- The budget dedicates \$51.7 million to infrastructure improvements and resource management for the award-winning Florida State Park system.

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

- The budget includes the following for waste management:
 - \$125 million – Underground Petroleum Storage Tank Cleanup
 - \$7 million – Dry Cleaning/Site Cleanup
 - \$4 million – Hazardous Waste/Site Cleanup
 - \$1 million – To Assist Homeowners with Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and Perfluorooctane Sulfonate (PFOS) contaminants.

Q: Does the budget include funding for springs restoration?

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

Q: How does the budget address the implementation of Volkswagen Clean Air Act settlement?

- The budget includes \$53 million for continued implementation of the State Mitigation Plan for the \$166 million Volkswagen Clean Air Act settlement, which will assist with the reduction of diesel emissions and further improve Florida's air quality.

Q: Does the budget address manatee management and rehabilitation?

- The budget includes \$3.8 million for the care and management of manatees, which includes:
 - \$2.9 million to increase the capacity to treat injured and distressed manatees
 - \$878,000 to enhance monitoring and research

Q: How much does the budget include for Agriculture?

- The budget provides more than \$1.7 billion to support Florida's agricultural industry.

Q: What is in the budget for wildfire prevention?

- The budget provides \$10.7 million for wildfire prevention efforts.
 - \$6.7 million for replacement of wildfire equipment
 - \$4 million for road and bridge maintenance to allow for better access for land management and wildfire suppression activities

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

- \$29.2 million for citrus, including:
 - \$8 million for Citrus Research
 - \$6.2 million for the Citrus Health Response Program (CHRP)
 - \$15 million to support consumer awareness efforts

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

- The budget provides more than \$1.5 billion of Land Acquisition Trust Fund dollars for a variety of conservation and restoration programs including Florida Forever land acquisition and management, Everglades restoration, springs restoration projects, beach management projects, and improvements to Florida's award-winning state parks.

Transportation and Economic Development

Q: Does the budget include funding for affordable and workforce housing?

- The Freedom First Budget includes \$355.5 million to fully fund affordable and workforce housing. This includes \$95 million for the State Apartment Incentive Loan (SAIL) program and \$220.5 million for the State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program (SHIP).
- The budget also includes \$40 million in the current year to establish a revolving loan program to support workforce homeownership, including down payment assistance and closing costs assistance.

Q: What does the budget include for emergency management?

- The budget includes \$664 million in federal and state funding for open federally declared disasters, so the state can continue to respond and recover from these disasters, as well as mitigate the impact of any future disasters or emergencies.
- The budget also includes \$22 million to continue Florida's response efforts for the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Rebuild Florida Revolving Loan Fund Program includes \$16 million to support the Rebuild Florida Revolving Loan Program in Hurricane Michael affected counties.
 - This program, supported by an award from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration, assists businesses with disaster related economic changes, and can be used to address capital needs and help businesses implement plans for resiliency to protect against future storms.

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

- The budget includes an estimate of over \$473 million in federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds directed toward local hurricane recovery and hardening efforts throughout the state. These funds include several CDBG programs, including CDBG Disaster Recovery Program for all named hurricanes since 2017 and CDBG Mitigation Program.

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

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

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

- The budget includes \$50 million for VISIT FLORIDA, the same amount as in the current fiscal year.

Q: What is included in the budget to help Florida’s rural areas grow and prosper?

- The following items are included in the budget for the coming fiscal year:
 - \$105 million, an increase of \$100 million over current year, for the Rural Infrastructure Fund to support local rural infrastructure projects such as broadband, roads, storm and wastewater systems, and telecommunications facilities.
 - \$1.17 million for the Rural Community Development Revolving Loan Program to provide local governments with access to financial assistance to further promote the economic viability of Florida’s rural communities.

Q: Does the budget include additional funding targeted to detecting and preventing Reemployment Assistance fraud?

- The budget includes \$4.2 million for the Stop Inmate Fraud Program, designed to detect fraudulent public assistance activity (including reemployment assistance) by incarcerated individuals, helping to ensure that only those eligible are receiving government benefits.

Q: Is there funding in the budget to help retain Florida’s first responders?

- The budget includes \$220 million for a one-time relief payment of \$1,000 to support the retention Florida’s First Responders.

Q: What is included in the budget to further enhance Florida’s law enforcement workforce?

- The budget includes \$25 million in bonus payments for law enforcement officers who are new to the profession in the state, including those relocating from other states because of vaccine mandates. This initiative will provide bonus payments of \$5,000 to eligible law enforcement officers.

Q: Is there funding in the budget to improve Florida’s workforce training and development system?

- For ongoing support of legislation passed that will comprehensively overhaul Florida’s workforce training and development system, the budget continues funding for up to \$100 million to implement the Consumer-first Workforce System.

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

- The budget includes \$39.8 million for state-level election oversight activities, with a focus on cybersecurity enhancements to Florida’s election system. This amount includes:
 - \$5.7 million to create and staff an Office of Election Crimes and Security that will investigate election crimes and fraud.
 - \$8 million for the Supervisors of Elections to continue cybersecurity initiatives and improvements to their systems.
 - \$13 million for security improvements and enhancements to election technology, such as the Florida Voter Registration System, the Online Voter Registration System, and the Campaign Finance System.

Q: What is the total budget for the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for Fiscal Year 2021-22?

- The budget includes \$10.4 billion for the Department of Transportation. Of this amount, \$9.27 billion goes toward the Transportation Work Program which supports transportation and infrastructure projects throughout the state.
- This investment will provide for the retention or creation of more than 155,000 jobs. Every dollar invested in transportation is estimated to result in a return of up to \$4 in user and economic benefits to Florida’s residents and businesses. Additionally, this helps to diversify Florida’s economy.

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

- The budget provides \$9.27 billion for the Transportation Work Program, used for the construction and maintenance of Florida’s roads, bridges, rails, seaports and other public transportation systems that grow the state’s economy and improve the quality of life for our citizens. This includes:
 - \$3.6 billion for highway construction to include 138 new lane miles.
 - \$1.2 billion in resurfacing to include 2,637 lane miles.
 - \$117.3 million in seaport infrastructure improvements to ensure Florida’s ports continue to have capacity while the rest of the nation struggles from supply chain backups at seaports.
 - \$297.2 million for aviation improvements.
 - \$185.5 million in scheduled repairs for 52 bridges and replacement of 17 bridges.
 - \$597.7 million investment in rail and transit projects.
 - \$154.9 million for safety initiatives.

Health and Human Services

Q: Does the Governor's Budget include any rate increases for direct care workers?

- Yes, the Freedom First Budget provides \$28.5 million in funding for behavioral service providers that work with Agency for Persons with Disabilities clients. These rates will be comparable to those who are served on the Medicaid State Plan.
- Yes, the Freedom First Budget includes \$198 million for direct care staff in Home and Community Based Settings in the Agency for Health Care Administration and the Agency for Persons with Disabilities. These individuals have continued to answer the call and provide services to some of our most vulnerable residents.

Q: Does the Governor's budget include a reduction to Medicaid?

- The Governor's budget fully funds the Medicaid Program, which includes the adjustments made by the August Social Services Estimating Conference.
- Additionally, with the extension of the public health emergency the enhanced FMAP for the Florida Medicaid Program has been extended through March 2022. This extension will save an estimated \$404 million in general revenue funding that will be used to address the Medicaid budget needs for Fiscal Year 2022-23.

Q: Does the Governor's budget support pharmaceutical price transparency?

- Yes, the Governor's budget provides \$3.9 million to broaden the scope of prescription drug information that is available to consumers and to ensure contract compliance between Medicaid Health Plans and Pharmacy Benefit Managers.

Q: Does the Governor's budget include funding to combat Medicaid fraud?

- Yes, the Freedom First Budget includes \$250,000 for a pilot project to use blockchain technology to authenticate Medicaid transactions and identify potential fraud.

Q: Does the Governor's budget include any initiatives to lower the price of prescription drugs?

- The Governor's budget provides a mechanism to work with a vendor to negotiate prices for expensive medications such as insulin, epinephrine and other medications when possible.

Q: How many individuals does the Governor’s budget serve on the Agency for Persons with Disabilities waiting list?

- The Freedom First Budget provides \$25.5 million to allow approximately 480 individuals in crisis to enroll onto the Agency for Persons with Disabilities waiver program.

Q: What does the Governor’s proposed budget include to address the opioid epidemic?

- The Freedom First Budget provides \$82 million in total funding to fight the opioid crisis in Florida.
- This funding will provide evidence-based prevention services, support medication assisted treatment and recovery services, and will enhance drug overdose surveillance.

Q: Does the Governor’s proposed budget increase behavioral health funding?

- Yes, the Governor’s budget provides \$188.6 million in funding for community based behavioral health services, forensic bed capacity, and operations of the state mental health treatment facilities.
- Additionally, this funding will provide a comprehensive array of behavioral health treatment services that seek to reduce overdoses, suicides and unemployment and help break the cycle of hospitalization and homelessness.

Q: What does the Governor’s budget recommend for enhancing Child Welfare?

- The Freedom First Budget provides \$133.9 million to provide funding for services for those who are served by Florida’s child welfare system.
- The Freedom First Budget invests \$11.2 million maintenance adoption subsidies and adoption benefits for state employees to support adoptions of children from foster care.
- The Freedom First Budget also includes funding for operational support and community based services, foster parent support and modernization of the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) system.

Q: Does the Governor’s budget include assistance for foster parents?

- Yes, the Freedom First Budget includes \$8.9 million for up to an additional \$300 for each foster parent to assist them in covering the cost of early education and child care.

Q: Does the Governor’s budget provide funding for Early Childhood Courts?

- The Freedom First Budget includes \$2.1 million in new funding.
- This will provide a dedicated funding source to support the current participants and the expansion of the Early Childhood Court programs across the State of Florida Judicial Circuits.

- Additionally, this will provide a dedicated staff member within the Department of Children and Families to standardize the program by ensuring quality and accountability with a strong focus on continuing to achieve permanency for children.
- This program allows courts to take what is currently known about the appropriate services and best practices for early brain development and make them available to the most vulnerable children.

Q: Does the Governor’s budget include funding for cancer research?

- The Freedom First Budget invests \$100 million in funding for the Florida’s National Cancer Institute Program, which is an increase of more than \$37 million over current year funding.
- This additional funding will continue to enhance Florida’s competitiveness in cancer research and care at national and international levels and help ensure that all Floridians have access to the highest quality of care.

Q: Does the Governor’s budget support Alzheimer’s Disease Research?

- Yes, the Governor’s budget provides \$15 million in funding, which is an increase in \$10 million over current year funding. This funding will enhance diagnosis and prevention strategies for those impacted by this disease.

Q: Does the Governor’s budget support services for seniors?

- The Freedom First Budget invests an additional \$10 million to serve over 1,000 seniors to receive services through the Alzheimer’s Disease Initiative and the Community Care for Elderly Program.
- These programs will support activities of daily living, medical assistance and caregiver support to keep seniors in their homes.
- The Freedom First Budget also provides additional resources for the Office of Public and Professional Guardians to ensure the protection of vulnerable seniors.

Q: Does the Governor’s budget support funding for Veterans?

- The Freedom First Budget invests \$63.4 million to support equipment updates, capital improvements, medical costs for nursing home residents and the remaining staffing needs for the Ardie R. Copas and Lake Baldwin State Veterans’ Nursing Homes.
- The budget also includes more than \$2 million to assist veterans in training, networking and mentoring throughout the state.
- The Freedom First Budget provides \$350,000 for a veteran’s suicide prevention program that will assist Florida’s veterans and their families obtain the services and assistance they need.

Public Safety

Q: What is the recommended budget for public safety?

- The Freedom First Budget recommends \$5.9 billion for necessary investments in public safety, including funding for safer and more modern correctional facilities, information technology enhancements, workload, and statewide prosecution issues.

Department of Corrections

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget cut funding for the Department of Corrections?

- No. The Freedom First Budget recommends an additional \$104.6 million (not including pay issues and compression) above base to improve officer retention, increase inmate programming, make correctional facilities safer, enhance inmate mental health services, and make technology upgrades.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget address high Correctional Officer turnover and retention issues?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$189.1 million to address staffing issues. This includes:
 - \$15.9 million to continue implementing a retention step plan for the Correctional Officer series, the Correctional Probation Officer series, and the Inspector series that will provide a \$1,000 pay increase at two years of service, a \$1,500 pay increase at five years of service, and a \$2,500 pay increase at eight years of service;
 - \$124.2 million to increase the base rate of pay to \$20 an hour for specified positions;
 - \$47.1 million to address \$13 minimum wage compression issues; and
 - \$1.9 million and 12 FTE to hire statewide recruitment staffing as well as contract with a marketing firm to develop and implement a marketing campaign to broaden the reach of recruitment efforts.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget include funds for inmate programming?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes an increase of \$20 million in budget authority within the State-Operated Inmate Welfare Trust Fund in order to allow the Department of Corrections to improve inmate health and well-being and decrease inmate idleness and violence through increased investments in inmate programming.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget include any funding for private prisons?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$14 million for a price level increase for increased per diem amounts from contract rebids at certain privately operated correctional facilities. Five out of the seven private prison contracts will have increased per diems prior to the beginning of Fiscal Year 2022-23. On average, these per diems are increasing by \$4.95.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget provide any funding for maintenance and repair?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$3.8 million to fund various standard maintenance and repair projects within correctional facilities as well as a nonrecurring increase of \$7.5 million in budget authority within the State-Operated Inmate Welfare Trust Fund in order to make facility improvements.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget address the growing contraband issue in state prisons?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$5 million for a variety of security equipment (e.g., biometric identification and electronic key systems, drone support for K-9 operations, a body scanner, cameras, etc.). The budget also includes \$1.1 million and 14 Correctional Officer FTE who will be dedicated to collecting security threat group (i.e., gang) intelligence.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget include any funding for inmate mental health services?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$1.3 million and ten FTE to create two Behavioral Risk Management Teams (BRMT). These teams would work to provide specialized on-site monitoring of high-risk facilities to ensure inmates with mental health needs have access to appropriate services.

Q: How does the Governor's recommended budget address future issues that could be facing the Department of Corrections?

- The Freedom First Budget includes \$5 million for a comprehensive prison modernization and position alignment analysis. This analysis will be conducted by an outside firm and will define the economic and demographic trends facing Florida over the next several decades and make recommendations for the most efficient and cost-effective approach to meeting the Department's staffing and aging infrastructure challenges.
- In addition to addressing issues caused by staffing levels as well as the location, condition, and design of Department facilities, this comprehensive plan will also study and recommend ways in which the Department can provide for the modernization of hospital services at the Reception and Medical Center (RMC) as well as develop and implement a plan for additional

complex medical/long-term care (LTC) beds for the Department's aging inmate population.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget provide funding to improve the safety of correctional probation officers?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$2.3 million to develop a comprehensive statewide plan to provide all certified firearms carrying probation officers with a Department issued weapon, holster, and other required accessories. Provided funds are anticipated to be able to purchase approximately 2,137 firearms, holsters, duty belts, and magazines.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget include any funds which would improve the day-to-day operations of Correctional facilities?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$341,000 and four FTE in order to allow the Department of Corrections to hire additional professional development, training, and support staff and provide the Department with the ability to continuously produce quality instructional products that ensure staff are both initially trained and that they maintain the requisite certifications over time.
- Additionally, the Freedom First Budget includes \$2.5 million and 33 FTE to add death-row movement correctional positions to the security roster. These positions will allow death-row inmates further out-of-cell time as well as relieve the burden currently placed on the security roster by specially assigning staff to supervise this high-profile population.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget provide funding for technology upgrades?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$15.1 million to begin year one of a five-year plan to modernize the 40-year-old Offender Based Information System (OBIS).
- The budget also includes \$5.7 million to procure a combination of tools and services needed to provide for improvements to the Department's Information Technology (IT) infrastructure.

Q: How does the Governor's recommended budget address the Department of Corrections' transition to 8.5 hour shifts?

- The Freedom First Budget authorizes the Department to utilize existing vacant positions and funds in order to finish transitioning Department facilities to 8.5 hour shifts.

Department of Juvenile Justice

Q: Does the Governor's budget cut funding for the Department of Juvenile Justice?

- No. The Freedom First Budget recommends an additional \$27 million above base (pay issues and compression not included) to ensure a smooth transition to PALM, establish an Electronic Health Record system, provide for additional electronic monitoring units, increase the Department's cybersecurity positioning, and improve oversight in residential facilities.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget provide any salary increases for Department of Juvenile Justice staff?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$15.9 million for pay issues for DJJ staff. These funds include:
 - \$11.2 million to increase the base rate of pay for DJJ Detention Officers to \$17 an hour and to \$19 an hour for DJJ Probation Officers; and
 - \$4.7 million to address \$13 minimum wage compression issues.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget provide any salary increases for Department of Juvenile Justice contracted provider staff?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$25 million for pay increases for DJJ contracted provider staff.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget provide any funding for maintenance and repair?

- No. However, the Department of Juvenile Justice recently received over \$15 million for deferred building maintenance projects (e.g. repairs, renovations, and security maintenance projects at DJJ facilities statewide).

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget provide any funding to ensure that youth in the Department of Juvenile Justice's custody receive adequate medical care?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$695,888 and three FTE to allow DJJ to transition from an Electronic Medical Record (EMR) system to an Electronic Health Record (EHR) system. The establishment of an EHR system would allow DJJ to develop and maintain digital health records that are accessible throughout the Department's continuum of care (e.g. Detention, Probation, Residential, etc.).
- Transitioning to a fully functional EHR will allow for continuity of care, aggregate data collection, immediate access to youth records, and the clinical evaluation of the medical and mental health care for juveniles in custody of DJJ in real time as services are provided.

Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget address the increasing costs of placing youth on Electronic Monitoring (EM)?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$280,243 to cover the increased cost for juveniles being placed on electronic monitoring (EM) as well as allow DJJ to procure more technologically advanced EM units.
- DJJ is proposing to upgrade its current EM contract in order to cover an increase in the number of electronic monitoring units as well as incorporate improved hardware, software, and provider obligations.

Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget provide any funding to enhance the Department of Juvenile Justice’s cybersecurity posture?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$223,200 to implement Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) across DJJ's statewide network as a means to add an additional level of security to DJJ's data.
- MFA is a system that requires users on a given network to confirm their identities in two or more ways before accessing sensitive data. Adding MFA will add another layer of security to protect youth data and will satisfy Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) network security requirements.

Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget provide funding that will improve oversight of the Department of Juvenile Justice’s contracted residential providers?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$413,198 and five FTE to provide for enhanced monitoring and oversight services of DJJ's residential programs.
- Funds and FTE will be utilized to provide for an increase in the number and frequency of reviews that the Department is able to perform regarding the delinquency intervention services that are being offered by contracted residential providers.

Department of Law Enforcement

Q: Does the Governor’s budget cut funding for the Department of Law Enforcement?

- No. The Freedom First Budget recommends an additional \$21.6 million (law enforcement pay and compression not included) to finish the transition to incident-based crime reporting, expand the statewide sexual assault kit tracking system, modernize the biometric identification solution, finish the creation of the uniform arrest affidavit, and implement the country’s first Statewide Behavioral Threat Assessment Management Strategy.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget provide a pay increase to state sworn law enforcement?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$75.4 million, including \$8.6 million specifically to FDLE, to provide for a 20 percent salary increase for entry-level sworn law enforcement positions and for a 25 percent salary increase for non-entry-level sworn law enforcement positions.
- Additionally, the Freedom First Budget provides FDLE with \$5.4 million to address \$13 minimum wage compression issues.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget include funding for threat assessment resources?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$1.3 million and three FTE for year two of the implementation of the country's first Statewide Behavioral Threat Assessment Management (BTAM) strategy. Florida's BTAM strategy will use Regional Threat Assessment Task Forces throughout the state that will better enable law enforcement to identify individuals on a pathway to violence and prevent such individuals from committing acts of violence. These funds will also improve FDLE's ability to identify and analyze data, which will strengthen Florida's BTAM strategy and allow the agency to proactively address modern threats.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget include funding that will allow the state to transition to incident-based crime reporting?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget provides \$2.4 million to allow FDLE to complete the Florida Incident Based Reporting System (FIBRS) project. This project will allow Florida's law enforcement agencies to transition from summary-based crime reporting to incident-based reporting, which will ensure that Florida can continue to participate in national crime reporting statistics.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget include funding for cyber fraud prevention?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$543,990 and six FTE for cyber fraud investigations and protection services. The funds will help to combat the increase in cyber fraud victimizing Floridians, including Florida's vulnerable elderly population.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget include funding for the transition to uniform arrest affidavits?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$888,488 and two FTE for the final year of the four year uniform arrest affidavit (UAA) project. Funds will be used to cover the cost of cloud-based system costs and maintenance, user authentication software, and two consultants to provide assistance with onboarding contributing agencies.

Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget include funding to advance the implementation of Gail’s Law (statewide sexual assault tracking)?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$863,316 and two FTE for the second of three phases of the implementation of Gail's Law. Funds will allow the system to expand the program to include counties served by the FDLE regional crime labs in Jacksonville, Tallahassee, and Pensacola as well as counties served by two locally-operated crime labs: the Pinellas County Forensic Lab and the Indian River Regional Crime Lab.

Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget include funding to support the enforcement of E-Verify?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$2.4 million and 16 FTE for investigator and law enforcement positions at the Department of Law Enforcement and the Department of Economic Opportunity to support the verification of employment eligibility authorized in section 448.095(3)(e), Florida Statutes.

Department of Legal Affairs

Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget include funding to address investigations related to organized retail theft and the Gaming Control Commission?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$901,284 and six FTE for increased investigation workloads within the Office of the Statewide Prosecutor. These funds and positions will address prosecutorial needs relating to organized retail theft and cases stemming from the newly established Gaming Control Commission.
- Organized retail theft is a \$30 billion industry nationally and creates a significant financial burden upon both Florida businesses and consumers.

Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget include funding to ensure that Florida’s elections remain secure?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes an additional \$901,284 and six FTE within the Office of the Statewide Prosecutor that will work to address cases brought forward from the proposed Office of Election Crimes and Security within the Florida Department of State. This office will make criminal referrals directly to the Statewide Prosecutor who will investigate allegations of violations of Florida's election laws.
- The budget also includes \$210,251 and two FTE to hire additional attorneys within the Florida Elections Commission in order to address a growing investigatory and prosecutorial caseload.

- The Freedom First Budget also includes \$5.7 million for the Department of State to create and staff an Office of Election Crimes and Security that will investigate election crimes and fraud.
 - The office will contain 52 staff members, including 20 sworn law enforcement officers and 25 non-sworn investigators, and will review and investigate election crimes and irregularities and make referrals for further legal action directly to a Statewide Prosecutor.

Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget include funding to address cybersecurity concerns?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget provides the Department of Legal Affairs with \$318,000 for Information Technology (IT) Cybersecurity and Performance Monitoring Software Upgrades to ensure the department’s IT systems are secure and running at top performance. Funds provide for three services: vulnerability assessment, privileged access management, and application performance monitoring.

Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget provide salary increases to the Department of Legal Affairs?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$3 million for an increase in salaries and associated benefits for various attorney positions at the Department of Legal Affairs. This funding provides for a \$6,000 salary increase.
- The Freedom First Budget also includes \$1.3 million to provide for a 20 percent salary increase for entry-level sworn law enforcement positions and for a 25 percent salary increase for non-entry-level sworn law enforcement positions in DLA.
- Additionally, the budget provides DLA with \$2.9 million to address \$13 minimum wage compression issues.

Florida Commission on Offender Review

Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget include any funding associated with clemency?

- No. The budget does not include any additional funding for clemency.

Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget provide a pay increase to sitting Commissioners?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$134,584 to increase base pay for sitting Commissioners. Funds will provide for an increase in Commissioners' salary from \$95,506 to \$125,000, and for an additional \$10,000 for the Chair's salary to increase to \$135,000.

Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget include any funding associated with the civil rights action that has been filed regarding the constitutionality of parole for juvenile offenders?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$130,081 for an increase in litigation expenses so that FCOR can cover litigation expenses payable to the Department of Legal Affairs or private counsel, as appropriate, in the event that such funds are needed.

Justice Administrative Commission

Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget include additional funding for the Guardian ad Litem?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget provides \$4.4 million and 67.5 FTE to help ensure that every dependent child is represented by a Guardian ad Litem (GAL). These funds will allow GAL to hire additional attorneys, paralegals, Child Advocate Managers, and Child Advocate Supervisors in order to meet the needs of all eligible children.

Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget address the needs of the state attorneys or public defenders?

- Outside of more technical and smaller scale issues for JAC entities such as improved Wi-Fi, enhanced OPS services, building rental increases, and swipe card access for building security, the Freedom First Budget includes the following for state attorneys’ offices throughout the state:
 - \$292,521 and three FTE to the State Attorney’s Office in the 17th Judicial Circuit for additional staff for a Computer Crimes Division that is tasked with advising the Broward County Sheriff’s Office along with 259 law enforcement affiliates;
 - \$103,533 and one FTE to provide the State Attorney’s Office in the 11th Judicial Circuit with an experienced Assistant State Attorney to investigate and prosecute gun offenses committed by convicted felons;
 - \$820,130 and nine FTE to create a Career Criminal Unit within the State Attorney’s Office in the 5th, 19th, and 20th Judicial Circuits in order to focus resources on prosecuting repeat, violent offenders; and
 - \$634,805 and seven FTE to expand the Human Trafficking Unit and Task Force in the State Attorney’s Office in the 11th Judicial Circuit and to create a Human Trafficking Unit focusing on child sex trafficking in the State Attorney’s Office in the 20th.

Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget provide salary increases to JAC entities?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$7 million to provide for a 20 percent salary increase for entry-level sworn law enforcement positions and for a 25

percent salary increase for non-entry-level sworn law enforcement positions across JAC entities.

- Additionally, the budget provides JAC entities with \$22.7 million to address \$13 minimum wage compression issues.

Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget address the pay disparity between Regional Conflict Counsels and State Attorneys/Public Defenders?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$80,935 in order to raise the statutory salary cap from \$118,450 to \$130,295 for each of the five Regional Conflict Counsels (RCCs). In recent years, State Attorneys and Public Defenders have received increases to their salary caps. These salary cap adjustments increased the disparity between the RCCs and the Public Defenders and State Attorneys by over 47 percent. An increased salary cap of \$130,295 would bring this disparity down to 38 percent.

State Courts System

Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget cut funding for the State Courts System?

- No. The Governor’s budget includes additional funding to support Florida’s problem solving courts, to assist the Trial Courts in addressing the backlog of cases due to COVID-19, and for the Supreme Court to create a Fellows Program.

Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget provide a pay increase to State Courts System personnel?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes nearly \$900,000 to provide for a 20 percent salary increase for entry-level sworn law enforcement positions and for a 25 percent salary increase for non-entry-level sworn law enforcement positions.
- Additionally, the Freedom First Budget provides \$8.5 million to address \$13 minimum wage compression issues.

Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget include funding to address the backlog of cases that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget includes \$10 million for resources needed to address above normal pending cases (updated assumptions estimated that there will be 709,724 pending cases above normal on July 1, 2022). This will fund year two of the three-year Pandemic Recovery Plan.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget include any funding for new judges?

- No. At the time of the budget development, the Supreme Court's Certification of Additional Judgeships had not been released.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget include funding for problem-solving courts?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget provides \$100,000 and one FTE position to continue the work of supporting problem-solving courts. Funds will allow the Office of the State Courts Administrator to convert an existing FTE position for which grant funding is expiring to General Revenue and to convert an OPS position to a permanent FTE position.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget provide any salary increases for Trial Court Judges?

- No. The Freedom First Budget does not include funding to increase the salaries of Trial Court Judges.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget address the State Courts System's request for a Fellows Program?

- Yes. The Freedom First Budget provides \$591,965 to fund 10 OPS positions and implement a Supreme Courts Fellows Program. The Supreme Court plans to mirror the Legislature's Fellows Program where it lasts for two semesters, pays for up to 18 hours of the fellows' in-state tuition, and employs students as OPS employees making \$13 an hour.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget include funds for the State Courts System's permanent move to a hybrid-model of a combination of in-person and virtual proceedings?

- No. The Freedom First Budget does not include funding to support the State Courts System's decision to move to a permanent hybrid-model for judicial proceedings.

General Government

Overview

Q: Does the budget propose sweeping any General Government trust funds?

- The budget sweeps \$24 million from surplus funds in General Government trust funds. These sweeps will not impact services or operations:
 - \$5 million from the Financial Institutions Regulatory Trust Fund in the Department of Financial Services.
 - \$5 million from the Regulatory Trust Fund in the Department of Financial Services.
 - \$1 million from the Public Employees Relations Commission Trust Fund in the Department of Management Services.
 - \$3 million from the Hotel and Restaurant Trust Fund in the Department of Business and Professional Regulation.
 - \$10 million from the Professional Regulation Trust Fund in the Department of Business and Professional Regulation.

Financial Services

Q: Does the Governor's budget include funds for the FLAIR Replacement project, PALM?

- Yes, the Governor's budget recommends more than \$37.2 million in funding for the PALM (Planning Accounting and Ledger Management System) project to replace the antiquated FLAIR system. The PALM project will institute an updated, modernized, advanced statewide accounting system.

Q: When is PALM going to go into effect?

- Implementation of Phase I for all agencies occurred July 2021 with the replacement of the cash management function. Subsequent functions will be implemented July 2024 and PALM will be completely finished in Fiscal Year 2026-27.

Q: Does the Governor's budget leverage the use of cryptocurrency?

- Yes, the Governor's budget includes \$200,000 for the Department of Financial Services to implement a payment service to allow Florida corporations to pay state fees via cryptocurrency directly to the Department of State.

Military Affairs

Q: What does the Governor's budget include for National Guard community-based programs that serve Florida's youth?

- The Governor's budget includes \$5.8 million in funding for the Florida Youth Challenge program. Florida Youth Challenge offers services to high school aged youths to ensure they have technical and job readiness skills as well as mentoring to ensure they get their GED or graduate high school and move on to secondary education, the workforce or the military. The community-based program helps Florida's youth succeed.

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

- Yes, the budget includes \$8.9 million to support ongoing maintenance and repairs at armories throughout the state, which are used year-round for training and operations of the Florida National Guard.

Q: Does the Governor's Budget fully fund the National Guard tuition assistance program?

- Yes, the budget includes an additional \$2 million, for a total of \$5.1 million to provide tuition assistance to all applicable Florida National Guardsmen pursuing higher education.
- The budget also includes an additional \$1 million for the current fiscal year to ensure the program is fully supported.

The Florida State Guard

Q: What is the Florida State Guard?

- The Freedom First Budget recommends the Florida State Guard as a newly established volunteer organization within the Department of Military Affairs, under the purview of the Governor and the Adjutant General, to assist the Florida National Guard in state-specific emergencies declared by the Governor.
- Specifically, the State Guard would provide units related to medical, logistics, communications, and other support functions that are needed during responses to hurricanes, natural disasters, and other state emergencies.

Q: Who can be a member of the Florida State Guard?

- The Department of Military Affairs will develop member standards and qualifications; however, a member must be a Florida resident and 18 years or older.

Q: How many members will be in the Florida State Guard?

- The Governor's budget includes training and equipment resources for up to 400 members.

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

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

Q: Why does the Freedom First Budget increase the Florida State Guard compared to the Governor's announcement on December 2, 2021?

- Following the Governor's announcement of the Florida State Guard, the Florida National Guard has received an outpouring of volunteer interest leading to the Governor's decision to double the proposed force size.

Management Services

Q: Does the Governor's budget include funding for state facilities?

- Yes, the budget includes more than \$8.3 million to maintain and improve the Florida Facilities Pool, ensuring the state provides safe and efficient working environments for state employees and visitors to state owned buildings.
- The budget also includes \$6 million for the Department of Management Services to complete a study and design of a comprehensive state law enforcement training facility for use by both state and local law enforcement agencies.

Q: Does the Governor's budget proposal make changes to health benefits for state employees?

- The budget broadens the State Employee Assistance Program to provide mental health services to dependents at no additional cost to the employee.

Q: Does the Governor’s budget proposal include additional resources to reduce State Group Health Insurance fraud?

- Yes, the budget includes \$2.2 million for the Department of Management Services to implement a comprehensive fraud, waste and abuse analytic solution to assist in the detection and prevention of fraudulent activity.

Q: Does the Governor’s budget include funding to address the increasing number of cyber threats?

- Yes, the Freedom First Budget includes over \$50.6 million in various state agencies to enhance information technology security measures and controls to help protect Florida against the ongoing and evolving nature of cyber threats that can compromise critical state resources and sensitive information.
- The Governor’s budget also requires certain cybersecurity projects funded in various state agencies to be reviewed and approved by the Florida Digital Service prior to implementation in order to ensure compliance with the statewide enterprise architecture and reduce duplicative spend when feasible.

Q: Does the Governor’s budget maximize existing resources at state agencies?

- Yes, the Governor’s budget includes implementing bill language to reduce unnecessary spend by requiring the Department of Management Services to conduct a review of any agency request to purchase new vehicles, in order to ensure agencies are fully maximizing the existing state fleet of vehicles. This provision excludes vehicles for law enforcement, state fire marshal, specialty, or fire control purposes.

Gaming Control Commission

Q: Does the Governor’s budget implement the new Gaming Control Commission?

- Yes, the Governor’s budget includes 180 positions and \$26 million to fully fund the new Commission to ensure the fair and effective regulation of gaming activities in Florida.

Q: When will the Gaming Control Commissioners be appointed?

- Pursuant to Chapter 2021-269, Laws of Florida, the five Commissioners must be appointed by the Governor no later than January 1, 2022.

State Fiscal Recovery Fund

Q: How many State Fiscal Recovery Fund (SFRF) projects appropriated in section 152 of the Fiscal Year 2021-22 General Appropriations Act have received funds?

- Four initiatives have received 100 percent of appropriated funds.
 - Job Growth Grant Funding
 - Septic to Sewer Grants
 - State Highway System Project
 - Ports Operating Grants
- 20 budget amendments have been approved, totaling \$307 million.

Q: How much of the SFRF award is remaining?

- The State has \$3.4 billion remaining from the total \$8.8 billion awarded from the SFRF.

Q: How many projects are appropriated from the second tranche of SFRF?

- The Freedom First Budget recommends 16 projects totaling \$2.9 billion out of the \$3.4 billion SFRF remaining, giving the Legislature flexibility to address additional priorities.

Q: What agencies are receiving funding from the second tranche of SFRF?

- The Freedom First Budget recommends funding out of the SFRF for the Departments of Education, Economic Opportunity, Environmental Protection, Citrus, Military Affairs, Children and Families, Health, Emergency Management, and Management Services.

Q: How were projects selected for the second tranche of SFRF?

- Priority was given to the retention of teachers and first responders and for programs that would help continue Florida's recovery from the negative economic impacts of the pandemic. These projects provide grants for small businesses, workforce development initiatives. We also include key infrastructure projects that prepare the state for future emergencies and protect our environment.

Q: Will agencies who received prorated SFRF funding in Section 152 of the Fiscal Year 2021-22 General Appropriations Act receive the remaining funding in the Governor's Recommended Budget?

- Yes, the Freedom First Budget recommends projects authorized in Fiscal Year 2021-22 receive the full appropriation when Florida receives the second tranche of the SFRF.
- The United States Treasury deposited funds totaling \$4.4 billion in Fiscal Year 2020-21. When the U.S. Treasury provides the next transfer of funds, the remaining \$938 million will be allocated to the specified initiatives in section 152 of the Fiscal Year 2021-22 General Appropriations Act.

Q: When is the second tranche of the SFRF expected?

- The second allocation of funds from the United States Treasury is anticipated to be received in the spring of 2022.