

2022 Legislative Priorities Statement

Economic Development & Tourism

The Winter Haven Chamber:

Supports maintaining counties and municipalities' use of Community Development Agencies (CRAs) that will allow for the revitalization of blighted communities.

Supports the long-term funding of Enterprise Florida and Visit Florida so that they may continue to promote Florida as an ideal climate for business development and leisure travel.

Supports a reduction of the Business Rent Tax, with the ultimate goal being a complete phase out.

Supports legislation to fund Enterprise Florida's toolkit to attract and retain high-skill, high-wage jobs.

Health Care

The Winter Haven Chamber:

Supports and encourages the implementation of Association Health Plans to benefit small businesses.

City of Winter Haven

The Winter Haven Chamber supports the City of Winter Haven's requests to fund important water sustainability and infrastructure projects that will have a regional benefit to the future of Florida's quality of life and quantity of water:

Septic to Sewer, Remediation Area 6A which will remove pollution discharges from septic tanks

Lake Howard Watershed Treatment Enhancement which will eliminate untreated stormwater from a combined County & City 550-acre watershed that discharges into Lake Howard.

Sapphire Necklace Creation which is a regional stormwater infrastructure improvement and hydrologic restoration project.

Transportation

The Winter Haven Chamber supports continued funding of the design and construction of the Central Polk Parkway beyond the State Road 60 extension to eventually create a regional connection to the I-4 corridor.

Arts & Culture

The Winter Haven Chamber supports continued funding for programs that promote and expand exposure to arts and culture in Winter Haven, Polk County and across the state.

The Winter Haven Chamber supports the priorities of our education partners:

Polk County Public Schools

COVID-19 continues to impact students, staff, and schools, leading to a disruption in instructional continuity. This, coupled with the anticipated transition to a new statewide assessment, make it necessary to advocate for the following:

1. Eliminate school grading and/or to allow school districts/schools to opt-in to school grading for 2021-2022 school year;
2. Suspend the calculation of VAM scores for the 21-22 school year; and
3. Hold school districts harmless for enrollment decreases as a result of the impacts of the pandemic.

Continue to protect base student funding from cuts that would impact schools and teachers by allowing the Required Local Effort (RLE) to remain at its current rate.

Continue to increase funding for the Teacher Salary Allocation and allow funds to be spent on all instructional personnel when districts meet the minimum state salary for classroom teachers.

Any changes to the Florida Retirement System should act as an incentive to recruit and retain high quality school administrators, classroom teachers, and other school support personnel.

Continue the Funding Compression Allocation for school districts funded below the statewide average.

Allow the Discretionary Millage Compression Supplement to apply to the Required Local Effort millage.

Allow options for students to demonstrate high school diploma equivalency, including online accessible options.

Florida Polytechnic University

Florida Poly is requesting \$3.5 million through the universities of distinction funding to become an "Engineering Program of Distinction." The goal is to be a top 15 public engineering school (without a Ph.D.) in 5 years. To do this they must increase scholarship awards, enhance the academic programs, grow a high-quality faculty, and increase student services.

Polk State College

Accelerate critical high-growth, high-wage degree programs – The College is seeking \$5 million in operational support to expand its Health Sciences workforce degree and certificate programs in areas including Nursing, Respiratory Care, Radiography, Cardiovascular Technology, and more.

Invest in College facilities to support students – The College requires \$2,971,346 in Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) funds to complete the final phase of renovations to Winter Haven Campus Building 4, a 50-year-old, 67,000-square-foot academic and workforce classroom and office facility.

Expand access to higher education in Northeast Polk County - The College is requesting \$13.8 million in PECO funds to begin the Northeast Ridge: Phase I development in the fastest growing area of the County. This campus will increase access to academic and workforce programs for students and families in Haines City, Davenport, Poinciana, and the Four Corners region.

Invest in College facilities to support lab science instruction – The College is seeking \$16,689,627 in PECO funds to complete the renovation of Winter Haven Campus Building 3, a critical academic and laboratory facility used for STEM-related laboratory science coursework required for Associate in Science and Associate in Arts programs.