

FLORIDA CONSERVATION COALITION



March 2, 2020

Senator Rob Bradley
Appropriations Chair
Representing District 5, Florida State Senate
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Senator Bradley,

Via hand delivery and electronic mail to: bradley.rob.web@flsenate.gov

Re: Funding Allocation Concern Regarding SB 1878, as currently drafted

Dear Senator Bradley,

The Florida Conservation Coalition (FCC) Steering Committee is composed of professionals who have been on the front lines of Florida's environmental policy issues for decades and includes experts in water quality and supply, Everglades restoration, springs science, wildlife recovery, land conservation, growth management and more. The FCC is concerned that SB 1878, as currently drafted, does not equitably address statewide environmental needs including land conservation and protection of springs and rivers, and we ask that you please address this by amending the bill.

SB 1878 prescribes the division of \$625 million in annual environmental spending through the year 2023. The bill sets in statute minimum allocations and sums for various water projects and lists statewide land conservation as one of six broad categories where remaining funds may be distributed, if there are any. It also amends the Land Acquisition Trust Fund (LATF) statute to increase dedicated funding for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). None of the other important environmental priorities are similarly increased in the LATF, making their continued funding doubtful after the sunset clause in SB 1878. Florida's springs, rivers, and natural and working lands deserve the same protections and dedicated funding in the LATF as the Everglades.

In November of last year, over 123 businesses and organizations recognized Amendment One's five-year anniversary by calling for legislation that restores full

STEERING COMMITTEE:

Chairman

Bob Graham

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Organizations

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LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS

NORTH FLORIDA
LAND TRUST

ST. JOHNS
RIVERKEEPER

1000 FRIENDS OF
FLORIDA

Individuals

Ryan Smart

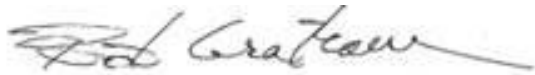
Victoria Tschinkel

Estus Whitfield

funding for the Florida Forever land conservation program, including the Florida Forever Priority List, Rural and Family Lands Protection Program, and Florida Communities Trust program, on an annual basis. The FCC continues to call for LATF funds to be dedicated in statute to land conservation, and we ask that such a dedication be added to SB 1878. We must stress that saving land is a significant component of solving nearly all of Florida's environmental problems. Florida cannot chart a sustainable path forward while continuing to lose natural and working lands at the current rate. We must balance growth with investment in our natural infrastructure, and it is inappropriate for conservation land acquisition to be dealt with as a discretionary component of the environmental budget. **For these reasons, we cannot support SB 1878 until full funding for Florida Forever is included in an amendment to the LATF statute.**

As discussion around SB 1878 is not just relevant to the bill, but to the General Appropriations Act, the FCC asks for your support to realize a longstanding and critical environmental funding need: refocusing LATF funding to fully fund Florida Forever for the remaining life of the Water and Land Conservation constitutional amendment. Please amend SB 1878 to provide for a more equitable distribution. We thank you for your time and look forward to working with you to protect all Florida's special lands and waters.

Sincerely,



Bob Graham
Chairman
Florida Conservation Coalition



Lee Constantine
Vice Chairman
Florida Conservation Coalition

CC:

Governor Ron DeSantis
Secretary Noah Valenstein
Senator Debbie Mayfield