



THE FLORIDA SENATE
THE FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



Office of Governor Ron DeSantis
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399

April 21, 2022

Dear Governor DeSantis,

Climate change is the greatest threat to the safety and long-term well-being of Florida's people, economy, and environment. The connection between human-produced greenhouse gas emissions and the global rise in temperature is the [undeniable cause of this crisis](#), and our tie to fossil fuels as a state impacts our collective security and prosperity. We urge you to declare a *Climate State of Emergency* and take immediate action to prevent future widespread and catastrophic effects on Florida and its people.

In its most recent report, the [United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC) warned that human-caused increases in global temperatures must end as soon as possible to prevent "[widespread, pervasive, and potentially irreversible impacts](#)." The IPCC report also [explicitly mentions](#) Florida and Miami-Dade County numerous times, highlighting significant threats to our property values, vulnerable populations and communities, ecosystems, tourism industry, and coastal waters, [including](#):

- *Real estate losses of more than \$470 million in Miami-Dade County from 2005 to 2016 alone due to tidal flooding and sea level rise*
- *Widespread death of our irreplaceable coral reef and associated impacts on tourism, estimated at \$55 billion by 2100*
- *Massive taxpayer burdens to upgrade infrastructure, like raising roads and retrofitting stormwater systems, and the associated impacts on communities*
- *Harmful algal blooms made worse by climate change*

Scientists worldwide are telling us that the threats to Florida from unabated climate change are enormous, and they are calling on governments to act. **It is time for Florida to step up as an international leader in energy independence, resiliency, sustainability and green job creation.**



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Considering your stated interest and campaign promise to resolve Florida's ongoing water woes, the IPCC report's connection between climate change and Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) should alarm you. Future major HAB events will wreak havoc on our already-strained coastal ecosystems and wildlife and devastate local businesses related to Florida's tourism industry. Specific to HABs' impact to tourism-based companies in Florida, [researchers warn](#) that:

As blooms become more severe and more persistent, losses for firms within these affected counties could start to become catastrophic. The inability to recuperate the losses from the effects of the blooms could be exacerbated if more months are affected and hence more days are keeping tourists and vital revenue away.

HABs are also devastating to coastal seagrass meadows and the life they support. Red tide ([made worse by climate change](#)) is toxic to many fish and marine mammals, and it prevents seagrass from growing by blocking sunlight from reaching the seafloor. In turn, manatees, who rely on seagrass as their primary food source, starve to death or travel great distances searching for their declining food source. More than 1,000 Florida manatees [have died](#) in recent months, many from starvation.

But the climate crisis isn't just affecting our water and wildlife; it is also driving human migration and climate gentrification. Many low-wealth urban areas in Florida exist at higher elevation inland areas. While rising seas increasingly threaten high-value (and low-lying) waterfront properties, more affluent residents and businesses seek higher ground, [forcing low-wealth communities away](#) from where their families have lived for generations. Climate change will fundamentally change our neighborhoods' cost of living and makeup and exacerbate Florida's out-of-control housing crisis. Indeed, Florida's Statewide Flooding Resilience Plan outlines that sea levels are rising, and we cannot ignore the cause of this crisis or its other negative externalities.

Florida is already one of the most vulnerable places to hurricanes and extreme weather events. Climate change could make this much worse. According to the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) (NOAA), "climate change through the 21st century is likely to increase the average intensity and rainfall rates of hurricanes in the Atlantic." It's important to note that even if a storm does not make landfall on the continental United States, we can expect Florida to experience the impacts in other ways. For example, Florida received an influx of new residents to our state from Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in 2017. The climate crisis demands intense long-range planning and sustainable growth management to ensure that



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our infrastructure is adequate. Everyone who comes to our state to live should be safe to support themselves and their family.

While climate change will eventually cause harm for all Florida residents, it will cause disproportionate harm to our lower-income and marginalized communities. The [fourth National Climate Assessment](#) (2018), produced by the U.S. Global Change Research Program, warns:

People who are already vulnerable, including lower-income and other marginalized communities, have lower capacity to prepare for and cope with extreme weather and climate-related events and are expected to experience greater impacts. Prioritizing adaptation actions for the most vulnerable populations would contribute to a more equitable future within and across communities. Global action to significantly cut greenhouse gas emissions can substantially reduce climate-related risks and increase opportunities for these populations in the longer term.

Floridians are also experiencing high oil and gas costs. Despite being the Sunshine State, we are heavily reliant on volatile fossil fuels as our main source of energy production; moving off gas and oil will allow us to establish a more resilient, secure, and equitable energy market.

Therefore, we urge you to declare a state of emergency to protect Florida from the worst outcomes of the ongoing climate crisis. While under a declared state of emergency, [Section 252.36, Florida Statutes](#), allows you as Governor to utilize all available resources of the state government to cope with the emergency. We encourage you to use the full force of the State of Florida to:

- Establish a task force of scientists, environmental justice experts, and local community leaders to inform your decision-making. Study and propose a suite of policy and funding strategies to alleviate the consequences of climate change on human life in Florida.
- Identify and measure Florida's greenhouse gas emissions by source, industry, and county.
- Propose greenhouse gas reduction strategies, including a pathway for Florida to shift our electricity production to 100% clean energy by 2040.
- Prohibit all fossil fuel extraction in Florida and along our coast.
- Increase ownership of rooftop solar panels and reject proposals that make rooftop solar less affordable. Solar power is now the [most inexpensive](#) form of energy in the history of the world, and Florida, the Sunshine State, can no longer afford to be a bystander in this clean energy revolution.



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- Work to expedite the expansion of electric vehicles and increase mass transit availability and ridership programs.
- Develop sustainable and climate-friendly growth management policies to ensure our infrastructure is appropriate to support a growing population and changing climate.

Our constituents are counting on you to set us on a sustainable path forward. We look forward to your response to solve this immense environmental and humanitarian crisis. Please feel free to contact any of the signatories below should you have any questions.

Thank you,

Representative Anna V. Eskamani

Representative Angie Nixon

Representative Robin Bartleman

Representative Christopher Benjamin

Representative Carlos Guillermo Smith

Representative Yvonne Hinson

Representative Emily Slosberg-King

Representative Daryl Campbell

Representative Joy Goff-Marcil

Representative Daisy Morales

Representative Nicholas X Duran

Representative Dan Daley

Representative Michael Gottlieb

Representative Fentrice Driskell

Representative Travaris McCurdy

Representative Kristen Arrington

Representative Felicia Robinson

Representative Joe Casello

Representative Dotie Joseph

Representative Geraldine F. Thompson

Representative Susan L Valdes

Representative Michele K. Rayner

Representative Marie Woodson

Representative Andrew Learned

Senator Lori Berman

Senator Tina Polsky

Senator Jason W.B. Pizzo

Senator Shevrin Jones

Senator Victor M. Torres, Jr.

Senator Gary M Farmer Jr.