

2023



Florida Legislative Priorities

As the voice of the Lakeland Business Community, the Lakeland Chamber of Commerce continually advocates with elected leaders and policy makers to support pro-business legislation. During the 2023 Florida Legislative Session, Lakeland's businesses have identified the following priorities for action.

Key Priorities

- 🔑 Full funding for the **new 6th District Court of Appeals Courthouse in Lakeland**.
- 🔑 Elimination of Florida's **Business Rent Tax**.
- 🔑 Legislation to **stabilize and reduce property insurance rates** for Florida homeowners.
- 🔑 Full funding for the **Central Polk Parkway** (eastern and western corridors).
- 🔑 Recurring funding of the **Heartland Headwaters** Protection and Sustainability Act.
- 🔑 Advance FDOT funding of **improvements to the I-4/SR 33** interchange.
- 🔑 Address **Affordable Housing** needs to provide for workforce housing options.

Economic Development & Tourism

- Sustained funding for tourism via **Visit Florida** and related agencies
- Strengthen Florida's economic development and recruitment through continued funding for **Enterprise Florida**
- Support **Lakeland Linder International Airport** funding through **DEO's Job Growth Grant Fund** for improvements needed to establish a new **Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul facility**

Healthcare

- Preserve current **Medicaid reimbursement rates**
- Fund **Graduate Medical Education at Lakeland Regional Health** to support Polk County's growing population

Transportation, Traffic & Safety

- **Oppose legislation** that would eliminate the ability to use Rectangular Rapid Flashing beacons at mid-block pedestrian crossings
- Advance funding and timeline for expansion of the **I-4 corridor** including vehicular and multimodal improvements through and adjacent to Polk County
- Streamline funding for local "**shovel-ready**" projects designed to ease traffic in Florida's fastest-growing communities



2023

Florida Legislative Priorities

The Lakeland Chamber supports strengthening our education and workforce systems to close the talent gap and provide Florida with long-term economic prosperity through highly skilled and educated workforce.

Key Education Priorities

- Funding and support for much-needed **nursing education programs** to recruit highly skilled instructors, build technology-forward facilities and acquire state-of-the-art simulators
- Full funding of **EASE grants at \$3,500 per student** at Independent Colleges and Universities
- Continued funding for **VPK programs** providing critical early learning and necessary childcare support for working parents

During the 2023 Legislative Session, the Chamber supports the following education priorities from Polk County institutions:

Polk County Public Schools

- Eliminate 1-year moratorium for instructors to **return to the classroom** and still receive FRS benefits
- Modify the teacher salary increase allocation by creating a funding component to **address salary compression**
- Modify the statute to **extend temporary certificates** to 5 years for all recipients

Polk State College

- Support operational funding that will **expand faculty and space** in Winter Haven and/or Haines City
- Support \$12 million for renovation funds for **Building I on the Lakeland campus** for modernization and a student center, labs, and more classrooms
- Support continued funding of **Education Institute**

Florida Southern College

- Support funding for the **update of science labs** which include their citrus and horticulture programs along with their greenhouse on campus program.

Florida Polytechnic University

- \$3.6 million to enhance ongoing efforts to **establish university as an Engineering School of Distinction** that focuses on Florida's workforce.
- \$13 million for a **Student Achievement Center** to support 1,600+ students.

Warner University

- Support \$3.5 million dollar appropriation for **sewer service** that serves Warner and this portion of Polk County.

Keiser University

- Support **Criminal Justice/Cybersecurity** with a grant from the Joint Legislative Budget Commission to purchase a state-of-the art virtual simulation training system

Webber University

- Support funding of \$1.5 million for construction of a **Health Sciences Building**