



| **State and Local Government Affairs Department**
Building Homes, Enriching Communities

April 21, 2025

Honorable Mark Smith, District 2
Sarasota County Board of Commissioners
1660 Ringling Blvd.
Sarasota, FL 34236

RE: COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR AUTHORIZATION TO SIGN-OFF ON THE SUB-RECEIPT AGREEMENT-AGENDA ITEM FILE 22-SUPPORT

Dear Pro Tem Mark Smith:

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) is a national trade association representing more than 700 state and local associations and over 140,000 small to large-scale home builders across the country, dedicated to building homes and enriching communities. Our association members build approximately 80% of the single-family and multi-family housing units produced every year. NAHB works to advance pro-housing policies to help individuals achieve the American Dream of homeownership.

NAHB respectfully requests that you vote in support of authorizing the county administrator to sign off on the sub-receipt agreement that will release the already approved \$7.5 million of the County's Resilient SRQs program that was made possible by CDBG-DR funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD to train the next generation of young men and women in the trades.

These funds will go directly to supporting local young men and women interested in building careers in the trades. There is a 439,000 construction worker shortage in the U.S. and the lack of skilled labor negatively impacts housing affordability.¹ Labor shortages in residential construction translate to higher housing costs, increased home prices, and difficulty completing projects on time.

When this funding was approved last year, \$7.5 million of taxpayer funding was allocated for trade education, and the building industry committed to \$1.7 million of matching funds by 2026, deepening a public and private partnership, and creating opportunities for individuals who have a career interest in the trades. Further, the building industry committed to supporting individuals as

¹ <https://construction-today.com/news/nearly-half-a-million-new-workers-needed-to-meet-us-construction-demand/>



State and Local Government Affairs Department

Building Homes, Enriching Communities

they complete their training, assisting them with job placements and connecting them to industry networks that otherwise may not be available.

Approving the authorization of the County Administrator to sign off on the sub-receipt agreement will create a positive direct economic impact on the City of Sarasota. For example, the construction industry creates jobs, pays good wages, generates consumer spending that benefits local retail and restaurants, and supports local businesses. For example, a small to medium-sized housing development has well over 100 individuals working on the project, and more than 20 different trades are involved during the project's duration--including architects, engineers, electricians, roofers, carpenters, etc.; thus, investments in trades education creates jobs and increases housing attainability.

These tax dollars are an investment in Floridians who seek an alternative to the traditional 4-year college path and will equip individuals with in-demand skills. Florida's economy is experiencing growth in construction jobs, such as electricians, plumbers, and HVAC technicians are highly sought after to support the development of new infrastructure². Investments in trade education in Florida will help meet these demands.

NAHB's Legal Advocacy department reviewed the County's proposed action and made the following conclusions. The County's prior approval of the \$7.5 million allocation under the Resilient SRQs program constituted a clear and affirmative governmental commitment. This decision was not ambiguous or informal — it was an official act made with the expectation that the funds would be released to support a workforce training initiative aimed at equipping young people with skills in the trades. In reliance on that commitment, the intended recipient undertook meaningful and measurable actions to prepare for program implementation. These actions likely included hiring personnel, developing training curricula, engaging with partner organizations, and organizing facilities and outreach. These efforts were made in good faith and with the full understanding — based on the County's own approval — that the funding would be forthcoming.

To now withhold or delay the release of those previously approved funds is not only a policy failure but also raises serious legal concerns under the doctrine of municipal estoppel. Courts have recognized that when a government entity makes a clear promise, and a party reasonably relies on that promise to their detriment, it may be legally barred from reneging. This is particularly true when the government's actions were administrative or ministerial in nature — such as executing a recipient agreement that was already approved through proper channels. Denying the release of funds in this case undermines public trust, penalizes the recipient for relying on the County's own commitments, and may expose the County to legal claims. The

² <https://floridatradeacademy.org/trade-school-vs-university-education-weighing-the-pros-and-cons/#:~:text=Pros%20of%20Attending%20Trade%20School,security%20and%20potential%20career%20growth>.



State and Local Government Affairs Department
Building Homes, Enriching Communities

equitable and lawful course of action is to follow through on the original approval and ensure that these vital funds are put to use training the next generation of tradespeople as intended.

For these reasons, the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) asks the Sarasota Board of Commissioners to support these efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "LW", is positioned above the typed name.

Lily Weatherby
Director, State and Local Government Affairs
National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "ZP", is positioned above the typed name.

Zachary Packard
Legal Counsel
National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)