



March 26, 2020

Governor Ron DeSantis
Office of the Governor
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor DeSantis,

Florida Nonprofit Alliance (FNA) appreciates your thoughtful and proactive response to the threat of coronavirus in Florida. Nonprofits touch the lives of every Floridian every day and play a vital role in the state's economy and provision of services. In response to COVID-19, Florida's nonprofits are stepping up without hesitation to serve their communities, to protect public health and to support their own employees. **But nonprofits need immediate contracting, budget, staffing and programming flexibility and timely resources from the state, local governments and philanthropy to be able to continue this work through the months ahead.** As you consider policy measures to best equip Florida to weather this pandemic, we urge you to keep the needs of Florida's nonprofit community in mind.

Disruptions in state grants and contracts could trigger massive layoffs or even permanently shut down organizations providing health services, food assistance, emergency shelter, senior care, emergency child-care, mental health, substance use disorder treatment and other essential services in Florida.

On behalf of more than 84,000 nonprofit employers in Florida, I offer some insights from several of Florida's nonprofit leaders:

- Nonprofits, particularly service providers, are finding it necessary to adapt quickly to new operating requirements internally while communicating with and serving Florida's most vulnerable people in communities across the state.
- Human services nonprofits are likely to face a demand in services in the coming weeks and perhaps months. For example, domestic violence service providers expect some increase in the need for orders of protection, while being uncertain about whether local courthouses will be open or closed.
- Organizations that are subject to the constraints of Medicaid funding often serve the most vulnerable people in the state; they operate under inflexible contracts in many cases, and do not have access to other innovative sources of funding. Their unique needs will need to be considered as we think through the economic impact of the coronavirus.
- We rely on nonprofits to fill significant gaps in Florida. Yet they will be facing resource challenges due to special event cancellations, decreased volunteerism,

CC: President Galvano
Speaker Oliva



and declines in the stock market which impact donor giving. At the same time, they will face increased demand for their services and their leadership in communities.

We respectfully urge you to consult with nonprofit leaders statewide as we respond together to an emerging crisis. We hope you will consider the following as you develop a statewide, systemic approach to this emerging threat:

- Nonprofits are a trusted presence and communications pipeline for many of their constituencies year-round; this is a resource that can be drawn on during crisis. Florida Nonprofit Alliance will use our communications systems and listservs to deploy information rapidly; we will be a resource to your office in whatever ways might be helpful.
- Florida's charitable nonprofits pay wages, employing more than 534,000 Floridians and 5.5% of the state's workforce. We ask that any consideration given to employment-focused relief or stimulus include Florida's nonprofit employers.
- We urge the State to maintain customary payments to nonprofits that have current grants and contracts. If a nonprofit cannot fulfill its deliverables on a state contract or grant due to circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic, then we urge that state agencies be directed to allow billing to the contract based on customary deliverables (on the basis of average prior billings, or prior census of clients served) without penalty for inability to meet deliverables.
- Nonprofits like museums and performing arts centers which contribute to the vibrancy of our communities are as dependent on sales as any Main Street business. We ask that nonprofits be considered in economic stimulus planning and incentives.

Your administration has a strong history of listening and responding. We hope you will include nonprofit leaders as you seek frontline input and craft solutions. We will provide real-time information or insight to you and your staff in whatever ways are useful. You can count on the nonprofit community to be a partner in your work, and you can count on FNA to be a resource and communications conduit.

Thank you, and very best in the challenging weeks ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sabeen Perwaiz".

Sabeen Perwaiz,
Executive Director

CC: President Galvano
Speaker Oliva