

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 13, 2019

Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor
State of Florida
The Capitol
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

RE: Launch the Clean Energy Economy in Florida and Tackle the Climate Crisis through Innovation

Dear Governor DeSantis:

Congratulations on a productive first month in office. We are pleased that you are creating an “Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection” and are appointing a “Chief Science Officer”, and we encourage you to go further and tackle the most critical challenge of our lifetime: the climate crisis and its costly impacts. Together, we can work to build a clean energy economy that creates good-paying jobs and reduces the escalating costs on Floridians. The “Sunshine State” should be a leader in renewable energy and innovation. After all, a clean and healthy environment is the backbone of Florida’s economy and prosperity.

The U.S. Fourth National Climate Assessment (NCA) released late last year detailed impending impacts of climate change across the country with grave implications for the State of Florida (See <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/chapter/19/>). The NCA warned that Florida and the southeastern U.S. will experience greater frequency of extreme coastal and inland flooding, mosquito-borne diseases, high-intensity hurricanes, invasive species, coral reef die offs, heat-related health threats, and toxic algae blooms.

Two weeks ago, the nonpartisan Brookings Institution singled out Florida as the state most at risk to economic harm from the changing climate. Florida is more vulnerable than other states to significant economic damages, lost wages, mortality from extreme temperatures, and coastal property damage. Increasing temperatures also are responsible for other economic costs such as health impacts like asthma, heat stroke and water quality related illnesses, which are especially prevalent in communities of color which often are the first and most lasting to bear the brunt of our climate crisis. The growing impacts and costs are well known to Florida families, businesses and local communities, but for too long Florida political leaders have ignored the dire threat to our state – and the opportunities. We cannot afford to do so any longer. We must work together to address the crisis and transition the “Sunshine State” to a clean energy future. We can do so by providing the citizens of our great state with greater choice and freedom that a clean energy economy can provide.

As a first step, Florida should set meaningful goals for renewable power generation and energy efficiency to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and save consumers money, and then transition to modern power purchase agreements like reverse auctions which provide competition

and energy storage to boost the various regions of the state. While most other states have set targets for renewable energy and efficiency, Florida has not. Florida is far behind other states and the investor-owned electric utilities (IOUs) have been roadblocks to progress for decades. The parent companies of Florida Power and Light, Duke Energy and Tampa Electric are producing enormous amounts of renewable electricity *in other states and Canada*, and they should be required to make similar major investments in renewable electricity here. The IOU monopolies have stymied consumer-led efforts to expand solar energy and energy efficiency and Florida families, businesses and communities have suffered the costs. Thirty-seven states (plus the District of Columbia) have renewable portfolio standards or goals, which mandate a minimum share of electricity generation come from renewables. Hawaii, California, and D.C. have adopted targets for 100 percent renewable energy. Recently, the governors of Colorado, Illinois, New Jersey and New York increased renewable goals as well. The most economically competitive states in America will be grounded in clean energy technology and Florida should aim to be among them.

Local governments and businesses across Florida are using innovative and proactive methods to expand renewable energy usage and decrease our reliance on oil and gas, but they need a partner at the state level. For example, when Congressman Charlie Crist served as Florida's Governor, he created the Governor's Action Team on Energy and Climate Change and directed it to create a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and climate impacts. Governor Crist and the Florida Legislature together set goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, mandate more energy-efficient building codes, and push the state toward more renewable energy sources. The Florida Public Service Commission - which establishes conservation goals every five years - also increased energy efficiency goals and established a solar energy rebate program before gutting the regulations in 2014. Indeed, Florida is naturally positioned to make the greatest gains in clean energy while having the most to lose if we do not act as the impacts and costs of climate change compound. We need clear and strong state leadership to transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources and unlock the economic potential.

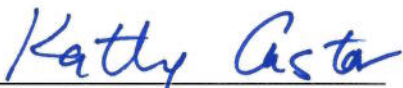
An integral next step also would elevate modern and efficient transportation options through investments in transit, electric vehicles and thoughtful land use policies. Florida's growing population requires modern options for traveling around our large state, and citizens are hungry for leaders to provide greater choice and flexibility to serve our workforce and the tourists our economy relies on to thrive. We can do better, but you and the state must take an active role in linking growing communities, revising building codes and protecting its public infrastructure in concert with local communities. Your new Office of Resiliency could play a thoughtful role in establishing the state-of-the-art policies of the future with nimble state agencies and a forward-thinking Department of Transportation. As your federal partners, we are determined to pass a transportation and infrastructure package to move Florida forward to lower harmful emissions and create good-paying jobs.

Finally, Florida should be a leader in building the clean energy economy and creating economic opportunities with high quality professions and trades. More than half a million jobs were created globally in the renewable energy sector in 2017 alone, with wind and solar jobs outpacing those in coal and more Americans work in clean energy jobs than fossil fuel jobs by a margin of 3 to 1. Not only does the renewable energy sector provide more jobs, they provide better pay, as well. Jobs in clean energy, such as installing solar energy projects and manufacturing

energy efficient equipment and appliances pay more on average than the national median. Our public schools, community colleges, universities and labor organizations already are educating and training the modern clean energy workforce. Businesses are clamoring for cost-saving, clean energy and green building choices, and Florida needs to launch this endeavor now.

We encourage you to be bold in establishing Florida's clean energy future and moving the Sunshine State away from polluting fossil fuels and their exorbitant costs. Naysayers and vested dirty fuel interests often argue that the transition to clean energy is too costly. Actually, the cost of doing nothing - the status quo - is an enormous threat to Florida. The State simply cannot shirk its responsibility. Florida should be a national leader in building the clean energy economy and we are poised to help you succeed. We should take our place among the responsible stewards of our planet for our children and future generations. You have the opportunity of a lifetime to move Florida forward and we urge you to do so with courage and vision. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



Ted Deutch
Member of Congress




Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



Donna Shalala
Member of Congress




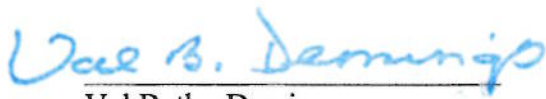
Charlie Crist
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Debbie Wasserman Schultz
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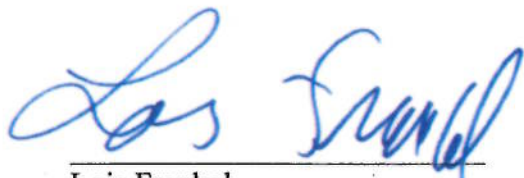

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