

March 8, 2024

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Plaza Level, The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399



Re. CS/CS/HB 1645, “Energy Resources” Veto Request.

Governor DeSantis:

Sierra Club, the oldest, largest environmental advocacy organization in the nation with more than 240,000 members and supporters in Florida, urges you to veto CS/CS/HB 1645, “Energy Resources.”

This bill would have a devastating impact on our ability to address climate change. Florida’s insistence on ignoring the root cause of climate change, fossil fuel use, threatens the state’s health, economy, and safety. Moreover, storms and sea level rise continue to worsen while half-hearted and incomplete “resilience” strategies make things worse for Floridians with protectionist preemption for fossil fuels which are the problem. This deliberate inaction has led to:

- A loss of about \$100 billion dollars due to lost productivity from heat a year in the United States that is projected to grow to nearly \$200 billion by 2030 and reach \$500 billion by 2050.¹
- A staggering 88% rise in deaths due to heat in Florida.²
- Skyrocketing property insurance rates³ and struggling insurers.⁴
- A looming real-estate devaluation crisis due to those skyrocketing property insurance rates.⁵

¹ “Extreme Heat: The Economic and Social Consequences for the United States,” The Atlantic Council, August 2021, 2-3.

² Brandon Girod, “Heat-related deaths in Florida have increased 88% in 3 years as temps continue to rise,” *Pensacola News Journal*, August 4, 2023.

<https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2023/08/04/heat-related-deaths-in-florida-have-increased-88-in-three-years/70519895007/>

³ Christopher Flavelle, Jill Cowan, and Ivan Penn, Climate Shocks Are Making Parts of America Uninsurable. It Just Got Worse.” *The New York Times*, Updated June 2, 2023.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/31/climate/climate-change-insurance-wildfires-california.html>

⁴ Ivan Taylor, Nearly 200,000 Citizens insurance policies could soon be on the move,” *CBS*, Published August 3, 2023.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/miami/news/citizens-insurance-policies-could-soon-be-on-the-move/>

⁵ Deirdra Funcheon, “Report warns of a real estate “climate bubble,”” *Axios*, Published September 20, 2023. <https://www.axios.com/local/miami/2023/09/20/report-real-estate-climate-bubble-florida>

- An estimated 120,000 workplace injuries in the United States every year due to extreme heat, a number that could rise to about 450,000 per year in 2050.⁶
- Stronger, deadlier, and costlier storms.⁷
- A looming \$76 billion bill for taxpayers on seawalls alone.⁸

And far, far more.

Instead of taking action to address climate change and the many issues that come with it, CS/CS/HB 1645 seeks to *reduce* action on climate at the expense of the health and well-being of Floridians across the state in the process. This bill would make facilities to store and distribute all kinds of methane gas a permitted land use in every county and municipality in Florida, including zones for activities such as: shopping, restaurants, daycare centers, and beauty parlors. The gas stored could include Compressed and Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), a costly, dangerous, and dirty form of energy. In addition, this bill would reduce public and local government input on and review of methane gas pipelines by extending the exemption from the certification process for pipelines up to 100 miles in length (up from the current 15-mile threshold).

Floridians deserve the freedom to make their own energy choices and to decide what facilities are allowed where they live, work, and recreate. Forcing ratepayers and homeowners to purchase expensive and dirty fuel may benefit large, out-of-state oil and gas companies, but it certainly doesn't benefit Florida.

Furthermore, this bill would discourage state agencies and local governments from purchasing electric vehicles by striking the requirement that the most fuel-efficient models be selected. Fracked methane gas has failed time and again for the same reasons: it's expensive, it's dangerous, and it's bad for the environment. On the other hand, electric vehicles are one of the fastest growing industries in the nation and would create jobs, clean our air, and save taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.⁹ Why trade the ability to set Florida on the right

⁶ *Supra* note 2, at 9.

⁷Rebecca Hersher, "Scientists explore whether to add a 'Category 6' designation for hurricanes," *NPR*, Published February 6, 2024.

(Note 7 Cont.)

<https://www.npr.org/2024/02/06/1229440080/scientists-explore-whether-to-add-a-category-6-designation-for-hurricanes#:~:text=They%20propose%20that%20Category%205,be%20exceedingly%20or%20right%20now>

⁸ Kirby Wilson, "Florida could face \$76 billion in climate change costs by 2040, report says," *Tampa Bay Times*, Updated June 21, 2019,

<https://www.tampabay.com/florida-politics/buzz/2019/06/20/florida-could-face-76-billion-in-climate-change-costs-by-2040-report-says/>

⁹Adam Winer, "Florida Senate Unanimously Approves 'Total Cost of Ownership' Bill for State Fleet Vehicles," *Advanced Energy United*, Published April 11, 2023.

<https://blog.advancedenergyunited.org/articles/florida-senate-unanimously-approves-total-cost-of-ownership-bill-for-state-fleet-vehicles>

track and prioritize the pumping of toxic greenhouse gasses into our homes and through our communities?

Instead of increasing investment to position our economy and environment for success, this bill ends the few genuine clean renewable energy grant programs in the state, and at the same time provides cost recovery for the natural gas industry (which will be paid for by homeowners and ratepayers). CS/CS/HB 1645 will now also prohibit Florida from accessing wind energy on or offshore. Even wind turbines located many miles out to sea wouldn't be able to send this energy to Florida because the bill prohibits cables or substations from turbines from crossing Florida's territorial waters (3 nautical miles from shore on the Atlantic side, 9 nautical miles in the Gulf).

Governor, this administration and legislature have consistently failed to address climate change. Instead of expanding investments in clean, renewable energy and directly creating jobs and savings for ratepayers, homeowners, and the public, this bill does the opposite. It strips local communities of the freedom to make their own choices, and forces an expensive and dirty fuel into our homes. Perhaps big government politicians in Tallahassee think they can make that decision for people, but we certainly don't. Floridians are feeling the impacts of climate change and this state's inaction in their monthly bills, paychecks, and day-to-day lives.

We urge you to take this threat to our economy and well-being seriously. Now is the time for more investment, not less. Veto CS/CS/HB 1645.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James C. Scott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "S".

James Scott
Executive Committee Chair, Sierra Club Florida