

April 16, 2024

Executive Office of Governor Ron DeSantis  
Plaza Level, The Capitol  
400 S. Monroe St.  
Tallahassee, FL 32399



**Re. GRU Authority Selection Criteria**

Dear Governor DeSantis,

We write regarding your pending appointments to the Gainesville Regional Utility (GRU) Authority board. We offer the following in the spirit of stabilizing a volatile situation and establishing transparent, accountable, and representative governance. We trust that you share those values and would like to see such governance as well.

GRU is the fifth-largest municipal electric utility in Florida, serving approximately 93,000 retail and wholesale customers. The GRU Authority board establishes and amends rates and prepares the annual GRU budget. As such, it has the potential to substantially affect the lives of GRU customers. Those customers include not just single-family homeowners and businesses but renters and people on low and fixed incomes for whom utility bills pose a substantial burden.

In addition, the process by which the GRU Authority was created was controversial and prompted much concern among many GRU customers regarding their ability to be heard and adequately represented by the new board.

For these reasons, we recommend you apply the following criteria when selecting the next GRU Authority board. We believe that doing so will help bring transparency, accountability, and representation of all GRU customers:

As the governor prepares to appoint new members to the GRU Authority, we offer these nonpartisan criteria for member selection:

**Community representation**

Members should:

- Represent the array of people who live in Gainesville and the GRU service area, reflecting the range of incomes, ages, educational levels, and cultural backgrounds in the area, and should include voices that have not been heard, such as customers experiencing a high energy burden, the percent of a household's income that goes to electricity and gas bills.
- Be involved in the community through neighborhood associations, community organizations, faith groups, and charities.

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- Be GRU customers for at least two years.

## Values

### *Transparency*

- Members should have a demonstrated commitment to open government, recognizing that transparency promotes accountability and that citizens must be informed of what elected and appointed officials are doing to be able to participate in their government.

### *Integrity*

- Members should demonstrate integrity in prior and current work.

### *Energy justice*

- Members should demonstrate an understanding of the impacts of unequal access to affordable energy on education, health, family, and productivity.
- Be familiar with best practices to reduce excess energy burdens and have a commitment to making energy affordable and reliable to all of our residents including the 29 percent who live in poverty, and the elderly who are most impacted by excess energy burdens.

### *Commitment to the public interest. Members should have:*

- A proven commitment to upholding the public interest over private interests.
- No financial or business relationships or associations that would create a conflict of interest while the member is serving on the authority.

## Expertise

Members should have expertise in one or more of the following fields:

- Energy generation and distribution
- Renewable energy and energy storage
- New technologies and innovation in energy generation, storage, and distribution
- Economic justice: the social and economic impacts of unequal or unmet energy needs on communities.
- Finance and economics
- Natural resource conservation
- Wastewater management or environmental engineering
- A field substantially related to the duties and functions of the board.

**Governor, we urge you to ensure that the next GRU board will be representative of the values and experience required to appropriately serve GRUs customer base.**

Sincerely,



Maryvonne Devensky  
Chair, Suwannee St Johns Sierra Club FL Group

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