



January 12, 2026

Via Email Delivery

The Honorable Randy Maggard
Florida House
322 The Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Re: HB 479 – Land and Water Management
1.13.2026 Agenda, House Natural Resources & Disasters Subcommittee

Dear Representative Maggard:

On behalf of the Florida League of Cities and the 411 cities, towns, and villages we represent, we appreciate you meeting with us to discuss our concerns with HB 479 as filed and the substantial revisions contained in the proposed committee substitute (PCS). The PCS appropriately moves away from the original bill's sweeping approach and eliminates the broad preemption of local authority over water quality, water quantity, pollution control, and discharge prevention. By narrowing the bill's scope, the PCS corrects many of the unintended consequences created by the original language and represents a meaningful improvement in the bill's direction.

While the PCS significantly improves the bill in several respects, cities remain concerned about the revised language addressing wetlands. The PCS has a more precise focus by prohibiting local governments from restricting adjacent upland activities outside a buffer set at a minimum of 15 feet and an average of 25 feet. Specificity can be valuable when it improves outcomes and provides workable standards, and cities recognize the importance of avoiding overlapping or conflicting regulatory requirements that can create uncertainty for property owners. In this instance, however, the bill codifies the minimum buffer into statute and, in doing so, prevents local governments from responding to real, site-specific water, flooding, and drainage risks.

Because Florida's wetland systems vary widely across the state in terms of hydrology, soil conditions, flood storage, and proximity to developed areas, cities must be able to tailor buffers and related development standards to local conditions in order to protect downstream infrastructure, manage stormwater, reduce flood risk, and avoid costly public investments. By establishing a fixed minimum and precluding local adjustments, the bill would limit a city's ability to address these local challenges even where additional protection is demonstrably warranted.

Florida's cities share the Legislature's interest in regulatory clarity and in promoting responsible land use. We respectfully request that HB 479 be further refined to preserve local flexibility to address site-specific conditions around wetlands, rather than replacing local judgment with a single statewide minimum that may not be adequate in all circumstances. Without further refinement to address these concerns, cities remain opposed to HB 479.

We appreciate your willingness to engage on these issues and would welcome the opportunity to work with you on targeted amendments that protect wetlands while maintaining workable tools for local risk management.

Sincerely,

Matthew Singer
Legislative Advocate
Florida League of Cities, Inc.

cc: Chair Botana and Members of the House Natural Resources & Disasters Subcommittee

