

Pulling plug on Enterprise Florida undermines state's competitiveness | Opinion



Enterprise Florida is key to recruiting new businesses and growing our existing ones. Without it, our counties would be left to compete with other states alone, and with conflicting aims. We must keep funding it, writes the op-ed author.

By **Kelly Smallridge**

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Florida has been blessed over the past half-century with explosive growth and opportunity. But as the world grows smaller, we must seize opportunities to diversify our economy and ensure tomorrow's opportunities.

In recent years, the **Florida Legislature** has debated what role the state should play in economic development. For me, there is no debate.

Our economy has traditionally been carried by tourism, construction and agriculture. These are critical foundations that we aim to keep strong for generations to come.

But if we intend to weather economic storms, and position ourselves for the changing dynamics of a global economy, we must be intentional about putting technology and emerging industries to work for us. We must recruit new businesses and grow our existing ones, or risk losing this strong foundation we have enjoyed for so long.

Funding for Enterprise Florida, the state's public-private partnership devoted to economic development, is at risk of being defunded by legislators. I hope they take a second look at this decision and weigh the consequences of taking Florida's foot off the gas pedal when we need a diversified economy most. That means everything from matching small businesses with international markets to recruiting job creators into all parts of Florida so that our kids do not have to leave home to find work. It also means helping market communities devastated by hurricanes and natural disasters when local economies need it most, and ensuring our 20 military installations have the resources they need to remain in Florida.

Enterprise Florida is the force multiplier and point of unity for the 150 partners of the Florida Economic Development Council. Without Enterprise Florida, our counties would be left to compete with other states alone, and with conflicting aims. There is simply no comparable organization to deliver the unified messaging and support of all of Florida's 67 counties than Enterprise Florida.

We have a new governor with a bold vision for turning the corner on increased capital investment, high-wage job creation, and advanced manufacturing. Governor [Ron DeSantis](#) needs all of the tools we can give him to get the job done. What a shame it would be to undermine the momentum he is building and forgo opportunities for a brighter future.

I urge the Florida Legislature to support Governor DeSantis, fund Enterprise Florida and send a message that we value good-paying job creators.

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