



# ManaSota League of Cities, Inc.

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*Anna Maria • Bradenton • Bradenton Beach • Holmes Beach  
Longboat Key • North Port • Palmetto • Sarasota • Sarasota County • Venice*

November 7, 2014

The Honorable Greg Steube, Chair  
Manatee County Legislative Delegation  
722 Apex Road, Suite A  
Sarasota FL 34240

Dear Representative Steube:

Enclosed please find 18 copies of the material to be presented by the ManaSota League of Cities for the Manatee County Legislative Delegation Hearing on Friday, November 14, 2014, at the USF Sarasota-Manatee Selby Auditorium in Sarasota.

City of Holmes Beach Commissioner Jean Peelen and City of Bradenton Beach Mayor Bill Shearon will represent the ManaSota League of Cities.

If there is any additional information you desire, please contact my office.

Sincerely,

Pamela M. Nadalini, MBA, CMC  
Executive Director  
Sarasota City Auditor and Clerk

Enclosures



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## **2015 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

### **MAJOR PRIORITIES**

#### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Community Development Block Grant Funding (CDBG)

- SUPPORT increased funding for the CDBG program which funds local community development activities such as affordable housing, anti-poverty programs and infrastructure development.

#### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVENUE**

The Manasota League of Cities will oppose any legislation that restricts or eliminates municipal revenues generated under the Communication Services Tax and the Local Business Tax.

- SUPPORT the preservation of the Communication Services Tax.
- SUPPORT the preservation of the Local Business Tax.

#### **MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES**

- SUPPORT legislation that plans and adequately funds basic mental health facilities and programs in Florida including additional psychiatric beds.

#### **PUBLIC PENSIONS**

- SUPPORT the codification of the Florida Department of Retirement's interpretation of minimum benefits under Florida Statutes Chapter 175 and 185 Firefighter and Police Officers' municipal pension plans that was issued in 2012.

#### **SOBER HOMES**

- SUPPORT legislation that defines and establishes minimum regulatory standards for Sober Home facilities and allows for more stringent local regulations of these facilities.

**MANASOTA LEAGUE OF CITIES  
2015 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES  
(Details)**

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Community Development Block Grants:** SUPPORT increased funding for the Community Development Block Grant program which funds local community development activities such as affordable housing, anti-poverty programs, and infrastructure development. CDBG, like other block grant programs, differ from categorical grants, made for specific purposes, in that they are subject to less federal oversight and are largely used at the discretion of the state and local governments and their sub grantees.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVENUE**

**Communications Services Tax:** OPPOSE legislation that modifies, restricts or eliminates the authority of municipalities to levy, collect and/or expend the Communication Services Tax. In 2001, the Florida Legislature restructured taxes on telecommunications, cable, direct-to-home satellite, and related services. This change was called the Communication Services Simplification Act and replaced and consolidated seven different state and local taxes and fees into a single tax that is comprised of two parts, the state CTS and the local CST. The CST is one of the main sources of general revenue for municipalities. Local governments collect nearly \$800 million year. These revenues may be used for any public purpose, including pledging the revenues to secure bonds. The loss or reduction of that revenue will be disastrous to the budgets of local government.

**Local Business Tax:** OPPOSE legislation that modifies, restricts or eliminates the authority of municipalities to levy or collect Local Business Tax. Many local governments in Florida require businesses operating within their jurisdictions to obtain a Local Business Tax Receipt. Revenues collected in this form assist in providing services that contribute to business growth – growth which directly contributes to the economic development of the State. These revenues are used by many local governments to assist in the funding of services critical to businesses. Some local governments use the revenue to help fund economic development programs, representing a direct benefit to businesses through the promotion and marketing of the local area and its resources. Many municipalities use the business tax as general revenue funds and have pledged these revenues to secure debt. The Local Business Tax is one tool that enables local governments to operate efficiently without reducing services to citizens. Additionally, it allows local governments to know what businesses are operating in their community.

**MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES**

**Mental Health Initiatives/ Programs Funding:** SUPPORT legislation that plans and adequately funds basic mental health facilities and programs in Florida including additional psychiatric beds. While most psychiatric hospitals were closed from the mid 1960's thru the 1990's, adequate funding of replacement community mental health did not occur, with federal and state mental health program funding being dramatically reduced in the 1980's and more recently in the Great Recession. As psychiatric hospitals were being reduced, jail and prison cells were dramatically expanded by over 200%. It is estimated that over 20% of our jails and prisons are serving as de facto psychiatric hospitals (without treatment capabilities) and over 30% of our chronic homeless population is suffering from severe mental health problems including schizophrenia, manic-depressive disorder, severe depression aggravated by substance abuses.

The lack of mental health beds and community mental health program funding has become a critical problem placing costly pressures on our jails, hospitals, police and EMS departments and our urban centers. As such, the lack of mental health treatment options for individuals, families, hospitals, courts and communities is fiscally and socially irresponsible resulting in an increasing number of well documented human and community tragedies across our country.

## **PUBLIC PENSIONS**

**SUPPORT:** Legislation that protects Home Rule power to set and fund municipal employee benefit levels and specifically provides comprehensive pension reform, disability presumption reform and a mechanism for municipalities to revoke their election to participate in the Florida Retirement System. The Manasota League of Cities also supports legislation that provides flexibility in the use of insurance premium taxes, as currently interpreted by the Department of Management Services.

## **SOBER HOMES**

**SUPPORT:** Legislation that clearly defines Sober Homes, allows for the regulation of those facilities, and details the minimum operating standards. “Sober Homes” or “Halfway Houses” provide needed transitional housing opportunities for people who are progressing through treatment for substance abuse problems. Presently there is little or no regulation from government agencies in setting up a sober house. Law enforcement officials have seen increases in crime and homelessness in neighborhoods where these Sober Homes have located. Residents of the neighborhoods have reported an increase in burglaries, panhandling, and other criminal activity. There is clearly a lack of uniform state standards or regulations for “Sober Homes.”