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Bringing Communities Together

March 29, 2024

**Subject: Letter of Support for the City of Palm Coast's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Application
– City of Palm Coast Dynamic Reinvestment of Piping Systems (DRiPS) for Wastewater Energy Efficiency and Climate Resiliency Project**

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC), I am writing to express our full support for the City of Palm Coast Dynamic Reinvestment of Piping Systems (DRiPS) for Wastewater Energy Efficiency and Climate Resiliency grant application. As a regional entity, we recognize the significance of this project in addressing critical infrastructure needs and promoting sustainability and resilience within our region.

The challenges posed by stormwater infiltration into wastewater infrastructure, particularly during heavy rainfall events, are well-documented. Such infiltration not only disrupts wastewater operations but also leads to inefficiencies, increased energy usage, and higher utility bills for the City. While the solution in of itself is not a novel approach, the City of Palm Coast's approach to attempt to quantify scope 1 and 2 greenhouse gas emissions to this project is commendable and aligns with our shared goals of optimizing municipal operations, conserving resources, and setting meaningful climate pollution reduction strategies. Further, it will help to develop a better understanding for the impacts of action and inaction in our region and for many other municipalities that are encountering similar situations with their aged systems.

The NEFRC is particularly encouraged by the project's focus on low-income and disadvantaged communities, where the impacts of stormwater infiltration are often felt most acutely. By targeting lining upgrades in these areas, the City of Palm Coast DRiPS project not only enhances infrastructure resilience but also promotes environmental justice and equitable access to essential services.

We believe that the energy efficiency measures proposed in this project will yield significant health benefits for the community. Reduced stormwater infiltration means less strain on wastewater treatment facilities, resulting in improved water quality and reduced public health risks associated with untreated sewage overflow. Additionally, redirecting a portion of operational energy savings to waive water utility connection fees for new workforce and affordable housing construction demonstrates a commitment to fostering inclusive and sustainable development in Palm Coast.

The DRiPS project represents a strategic investment in City of Palm Coast' infrastructure, with the potential to generate long-term environmental, economic, and social benefits. The NEFRC applauds the City of Palm Coast for their leadership in pursuing this initiative and urge the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to support its implementation.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Payne, AICP
Chief Executive Officer

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