

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA**

RESOLUTION NO. 22-XX.XX

A RESOLUTION BY THE MARTIN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS URGING THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO ENACT H.R. 160 AND S. 46, THE RESTORING RESILIENT REEFS ACT OF 2021, OR SIMILAR LEGISLATION REAUTHORIZING THE CORAL REEF CONSERVATION ACT OF 2000, AND ESTABLISHING THE UNITED STATES CORAL REEF TASK FORCE .

WHEREAS, coral reefs are unique ecosystems that play an important role in the environments and the economy of the communities where they exist;

WHEREAS, from tourism to marine recreation and sport fishing, [coral reefs](#) are also an important part of the State of Florida's economy, and play a central role in the economies of Southeast Florida's communities, including the Treasure Coast. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has found that coral reefs in southeast Florida have an asset value of approximately \$8.5 billion, generating \$4.4 billion in local sales, \$2 billion in local income, and 70,400 full and part-time jobs; and

WHEREAS, healthy coral reefs provide habitat for 25% of all marine species and provide significant habitat for fisheries. In the United States, about half of all federally managed fisheries depend on healthy coral reefs. NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service estimates the annual commercial value of U.S. fisheries from coral reefs to be over \$100 million; and

WHEREAS, coral reefs enhance coastal resilience by breaking wave action during storm events and dissipating a storm's offshore energy which helps protect coastal communities from storm surges and flooding. According the United States Geological Survey (USGS), Florida reefs provide flood protection to more than 5,600 people and help avert \$675million in damage to property and economic activity; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Reef Tract, nearly 150-miles long and 4-miles wide and stretching from the Dry Tortugas in Monroe County to Martin County is the world's third-largest barrier reef; and the only living coral reef in the continental United States; and

WHEREAS, massive, region-wide bleaching events have become more common on the Florida Reef Tract. Since 1987, six extensive coral bleaching events have caused mass coral mortality; and

WHEREAS, Disease outbreaks and diminishing health condition among corals throughout the Florida Reef Tract have dramatically increased due to water quality degradation from land based and high volume fresh water regulatory discharges resulting in nutrient and contamination loading, unregulated fishing, coral diseases, increasing ocean temperatures, and acidification; and

WHEREAS, while Florida Reef Tract disease outbreaks are not unprecedented, a currently observed disease is unique due to its scale, high infection rate, and rapid spread. The number of coral species affected across such a large portion of the Florida Reef Tract is estimated to have resulted in the mortality of millions of corals; and

WHEREAS, at the federal level there have been limited resources to address this disease outbreak and the overall health of coral reefs. Congress passed the Coral Reef Conservation Act in 2000, which authorized appropriations to the NOAA for coral reef protection and management activities through 2004. Authorization for the overall program expired in 2004 but Congress has continued to fund the CRCP through the annual appropriations process; and

WHEREAS, the Senate and House bills are sponsored by U.S. Senators Marco Rubio (R-Florida) and Rick Scott (R-Florida) and Representatives Darren Soto (D-Florida) and Brian Mast (R-Florida) and are supported by the entire Florida federal delegation. These bills, collectively titled the Restoring Resilient Reefs Act of 2021, reauthorize the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 and establish the United States Coral Reef Task Force (Task Force); and

WHEREAS, the version of the Restoring Resilient Reefs Act that has passed by the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and the full U.S. House of Representatives is part of the America COMPETES Act; and

WHEREAS, the Restoring Resilient Reefs Act provides a five year authorization for federal funding, provides authority for the Task Force to lead, coordinate and strengthen federal government actions to preserve and restore coral reef ecosystems, and directs a portion of the federal funding and technical assistance to states and impacted communities for coral reef management programs and conservation and restoration projects; and

WHEREAS, the Restoring Resilient Reefs Act specifically supports and funds the federal response to coral reef *emergencies* including disease outbreaks, bleaching, invasive species, natural disasters, hazardous spills and other exigent circumstances; and

WHEREAS, support for S. 46 and H.R. 160 is consistent with Martin County's long history of championing protections for Florida's coral reef ecosystems; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA that this Board:

- A. Urges the United States Congress to pass S. 46 and H.R. 160, the Restoring Resilient Reef Act of 2021, or similar legislation reauthorizing the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, and establishing the United States Coral Reef Task Force; and
- B. Directs the Clerk to transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate, Senators Charles Schumer and Mitch McConnell, the Speaker and Majority Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives, Representatives Nancy Pelosi and Kevin McCarthy, the Chair of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, the Chair of the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources, the members

of the Martin County federal delegation: Senator Marco Rubio, Senator Rick Scott, and Representative Brian Mast, and Representative Darren Soto.

- C. This resolution shall become effective upon adoption.

DULY PASSED AND ADOPTED THIS xx DAY OF xxxxxxx, 2022.

ATTEST:

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA

Carolyn Timmann, Clerk of the
Circuit Court and Comptroller

Doug Smith, Chairman

APPROVED AS TO FORM & LEGAL
SUFFICIENCY:

Sarah W. Woods, County Attorney