



Marion County Board of County Commissioners

McPherson Governmental Campus

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District 5 - Michelle Stone, Chair

April 1, 2024

The Honorable Rick Scott
110 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

RE: Programmatic request to expand funding for the Homeland Security Grant Program

Dear Senator Scott:

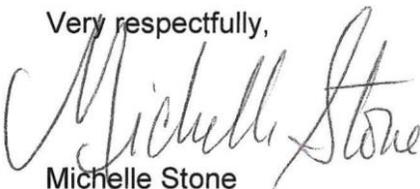
Marion County, FL (FL-03) operates a 7/800 MHz ASTRO P25 7-Site 12-Channel Simulcast System with two ASTRO repeater sites. The radio system provides Public Safety Communications to Marion County Fire Rescue, the Marion County Sheriff's Office, police departments of the Cities of Belleview and Dunnellon, as well as our own agencies such as the Office of the County Engineer, Code Enforcement, Solid Waste, Animal Control, and Marion County Utilities. Additionally, the Marion County radio system further provides backup communications for the City of Ocala and interoperability capability for the surrounding counties. Marion County has outgrown its current system as a result of record-breaking growth, and with the county's expanding coverage needs, a system that can overcome the obstacles that inhibit communication between the teams that keep its community safe is required.

We are asking you to consider expanding funding for the Homeland Security Grant Program by \$25 million in order to allow Marion County a better chance of receiving funds for these critical infrastructure updates to Marion County's Public Safety Communications towers. Funds will provide for the enhancement and development of improved radio system coverage through the expansion of the existing radio tower system. The expansion will comprise conversion to microwave transmission and construction of a geographically-redundant Prime Tower Site.

The expanded system will be built upon existing mission-critical infrastructure that supports emergency communications for the numerous agencies and departments listed above, as well as the Marion County Public Schools' fleet of school buses. Additionally, access to the geo-redundant Prime Site will be provided to neighboring jurisdictions in similar need of continuity of emergency communications. This project must be funded to meet the need of a fast-growing Marion County.

We thank you for your time, and know your commitment to keeping first responders safe. We hope you will consider our request to expand the Homeland Security Grant Program by \$25 million.

Very respectfully,


Michelle Stone
Chair