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## **Governor Ron DeSantis Activates the Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program for Agricultural Producers impacted by Hurricane Michael**

**Tallahassee, Fla.** – Today, Governor Ron DeSantis activated the Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program to support agricultural producers impacted by Hurricane Michael. The program will have \$25 million to help agricultural producers prepare for the upcoming growing seasons as part of ongoing recovery efforts from Hurricane Michael.

Designated disaster areas include Bay, Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Okaloosa, Wakulla, Walton and Washington counties. The application period runs through June 30, 2019.

“Since day one, my administration has been laser-focused on making sure Floridians in Northwest Florida completely recover from Hurricane Michael,” **said Governor DeSantis.** “The activation of the Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program will provide much-needed relief to Florida farmers whose crops were decimated by this storm and will help in our efforts to bring Northwest Florida back stronger than before.”

The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) currently administers the Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program with the Florida Small Business Development Center Network and Florida First Capital Finance Corporation to provide cash flow to businesses damaged by a disaster. The short-term, interest-free loans help bridge the gap between the time damage is incurred and when a producer secures other financial resources, including payment of crop insurance claims or federal disaster recovery appropriations.

“We appreciate Governor DeSantis’ leadership as communities in the Florida Panhandle are continuing to recover from the impacts of Hurricane Michael,” **said DEO Executive Director Ken Lawson.** “This loan will provide agricultural producers in the impacted areas the opportunity to prepare for the upcoming growing seasons.”

Florida agricultural producers with land in production that has suffered physical damage and/or economic injury as a result of Hurricane Michael can apply for the short-term loans up to \$200,000. To be eligible, the agricultural producer must have been established prior to Oct. 7, 2018.

“As agricultural producers are preparing for the upcoming growing seasons, we want them to know we are here to help walk them through the loan process as they pick up the pieces from the devastating impacts of Hurricane Michael,” **said Mike Myhre, CEO of the Florida SBDC Network.** “We appreciate Governor DeSantis for working to find solutions for these small businesses. It is a pleasure to partner with the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity to help small businesses throughout the Florida Panhandle.”

To complete an application by the June 30, 2019 deadline, or for more information on the program, visit [www.floridadisasterloan.org](http://www.floridadisasterloan.org). For questions regarding the Emergency Bridge Loan Program, contact the Florida Small Business Development Center Network at 866-737-7232 or email [Disaster@FloridaSBDC.org](mailto:Disaster@FloridaSBDC.org). The phone line will be answered during regular business hours; all voice mails and emails will be responded to within 24 hours. Applications can be submitted beginning May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

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