


# The Florida Prosperity Playbook: Getting Involved with Cutting Childhood Poverty in Half in Your Zip Code



“Growing up in the challenges of the foster care system, serving as a deputy sheriff, running a small business, and becoming a mother have all taught me that the Florida Prosperity Initiative’s approach is the best approach to remove barriers to ending the cycle of generational poverty and improve lives.”

-**Heather Cogar**, Statewide Director of Community Engagement  
Florida Chamber Foundation Florida Prosperity Initiative

# FLORIDA PROSPERITY INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

Incredibly, while Florida's overall economy grows, there are **711,576 children living in poverty in Florida's 983 zip codes**, and half reside in just 15% (or 152) of our zip codes.

For Florida's families to fully prosper, every Floridian must have an equal opportunity at earned success, regardless of their zip code or other dynamics that often act as headwinds for them.

When our President & CEO, Mark Wilson, testified before Congress in 2016 about his commitment to start a movement to end generational poverty for children in Florida, he highlighted that poverty isn't just a household issue; it's a business and community one. Replacing generational poverty and government dependency with self-sufficiency is another form of economic development that changes lives and communities.



**"The battle of this generation is between those who want equal outcomes and those of us who want equal opportunities at earned success, regardless of your zip code."**

-Mark Wilson, President & CEO, Florida Chamber of Commerce and Foundation, 2016 Congressional Testimony

Because cutting childhood poverty in half matters, the Florida Chamber Foundation launched the **Florida Prosperity Initiative** to leverage the business community's knowhow, resources, and focus to drive real solutions and Promising Practices through our nationally recognized "Florida Model."



**"Some community issues are too massive for any single nonprofit to solve and yet too important for community leaders to ignore."**

-Forough Hosseini, Executive Vice President of Information Systems, HCI Homes, Founder & Chair of FBH Community, and Volusia County Zip Code Leader (33114)

## OUR OBJECTIVE

The Florida Prosperity Initiative is focused on uniting business and community leaders to cut childhood poverty in half by providing all children with hope, opportunities, and pathways to break the cycle of generational poverty they otherwise wouldn't have. Leaders and organizations, including **Hope Florida, CareerSource Florida, United Way**, and the **Florida Sheriffs Association**, and others throughout Florida, are increasingly joining the movement to tackle this goal at the state, county, and zip code levels, uniting and connecting existing community resources to meet local needs and finally ending the cycle of generational poverty in Florida once and for all. Florida will be the leading example for championing children and replacing childhood poverty with prosperity through self-sufficiency.

# 10 ROOT CAUSES OF POVERTY



"We should be creating a society where someone born into poverty doesn't have to stay that way."

- Will Weatherford, Former Speaker, Florida House of Representatives, Managing Partner, Weatherford Capital



Years ago, in partnership with the Federal Reserve and the national United Way, the Florida Chamber Foundation conducted research identifying 10 factors (root causes) that can push any of us into poverty. These same 10 root causes also make it much more difficult for a child or family to escape poverty.



## Food Insecurity

Lack of consistent access to affordable, nutritious food due to financial hardship, food deserts, limited availability, or weak social safety nets compromises childhood health, wellbeing, and academic performance.



## Lack of Available Quality Education

Insufficient education and workforce development options result from local barriers that limit access to quality schooling, training and career pathways, reducing upward economic mobility.



## Unattainable Housing

Rising costs, lack of employable skills, and inaccessible jobs make stable and affordable homes unattainable for many families.



## Insufficient Transportation

Absence of reliable, affordable individual transportation or transit options that connect people to jobs, schools, healthcare, networks and essential services is a major barrier to self-sufficiency.



## Lack of Access to Quality Healthcare, Including Mental Health Services

Limited healthcare access can stem from financial, geographic, and other barriers that prevent individuals from receiving consistent, accessible, and affordable health care.



## Unaffordable & Unattainable Child Care

High costs, limited availability, and limited/uneven public investment prevent families from accessing reliable and affordable quality care for their children.



## Unsafe Homes & Neighborhoods

Unsafe domestic and neighborhood conditions arise from generational poverty, trauma, violence, and limited access to services that support community stability.



## Lack of Financial Literacy

Individuals need access to education, resources, and systems that teach effective money management and wealth-building skills.



## Lack of Employment Opportunities

Lack of applicable job training can limit access to stable, meaningful, and well-paying jobs with upward career potential.



## Lack of Agency & Community Voice

Residents sometimes feel hopeless or disconnected from shaping decisions and solutions that impact their lives, and having a voice and avenue to bring light to barriers to prosperity is essential.

Each root cause of poverty needs a root cause leader to connect solutions in each zip code. To become a root cause leader, contact Kristina Donohue at [kdonohue@flchamber.com](mailto:kdonohue@flchamber.com) or 850-661-3339.

# JOINING THE MISSION TO CUT FLORIDA CHILDHOOD POVERTY IN HALF



The Florida Chamber Foundation's Prosperity Initiative partners with **business, nonprofit, policy, community, and faith leaders** who believe that it takes a connected network to break the cycle of generational poverty. Whether you are interested in becoming the leader in your zip code or joining our Florida Prosperity Initiative Statewide Advisory Board, we invite you to engage in your community to build bridges out of the 10 root causes of generational poverty.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP UNITE EXISTING RESOURCES TO REPLACE CHILDHOOD POVERTY AND GOVERNMENT DEPENDENCY WITH PROSPERITY AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN YOUR ZIP CODE AND ACROSS FLORIDA

### BECOME YOUR ZIP CODE LEADER

Zip code leaders serve as the local champion within a specific zip code, coordinating root cause partners, implementing data-driven strategies, and advancing solutions tailored to address the 10 Root Causes of Poverty and economic challenges at the zip code level. The principal role of a zip code leader is to help raise awareness to better connect the dots of local resources and local needs.

### BECOME A ROOT CAUSE LEADER IN YOUR ZIP CODE

Root cause leaders lead zip code-level efforts, each focused on one of the 10 Root Causes of Poverty, working with the local zip code leader and stakeholders to discover, connect, and advance targeted strategies that address the systemic barriers impacting economic self-sufficiency.

### JOIN OUR STATEWIDE PROSPERITY INITIATIVE ADVISORY BOARD

The Florida Prosperity Initiative Advisory Board provides strategic guidance, policy direction, and statewide leadership for the Florida Prosperity Initiative, helping align regional efforts with our mission to eliminate generational poverty and improve economic mobility.

To learn more, visit [flchamber.com/prosperity](https://flchamber.com/prosperity)

# PROSPERITY INITIATIVE PARTNERS HIGHLIGHT THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT



**Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier** is a fierce advocate for the safety and well-being of Florida's children. Here, at the Florida Chamber's Legislative Fly-In, Attorney General Uthmeier shares how he is working with the Florida Prosperity Initiative to connect business leaders, communities, and law enforcement across Florida to champion solutions that make homes and neighborhoods safer.

Seminole County **Sheriff Dennis Lemma** is the President of the **Florida Sheriff's Association** and a national leader in solving mental health challenges, opioid abuse, and protecting children. Here, at the Future of Florida Forum, Sheriff Lemma discusses the recently launched partnership between the Florida Prosperity Initiative, local sheriffs, and local businesses to protect children by creating safer homes and neighborhoods in Florida's 983 zip codes.



**Adrienne Johnston** is the President & CEO of **CareerSource Florida**, Florida's designated workforce solutions leader. Here, President Johnston speaks at the Florida Prosperity & Economic Opportunity Solution Summit about shared efforts with the Florida Prosperity Initiative to align workforce and education partners to break the cycle of generational poverty through workforce readiness.

**Melissa Nelson** is the President & CEO of the **United Way of Florida** and a key partner in our Florida Prosperity Initiative. Here, at the Florida Prosperity & Economic Opportunity Solution Summit, President Nelson shares how collaboration between business and philanthropic leaders, and our increased use of ALICE-related data, are illuminating pathways to prosperity.



# 2026 FLORIDA PROSPERITY & ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY SOLUTION SUMMIT | JUNE 9, 2026 | GRAND HYATT TAMPA BAY

Join us at the **Florida Prosperity & Economic Opportunity Solution Summit**, June 9 in Tampa, to hear some of Florida's top business, education, and community leaders make the business case for prosperity as they share the Promising Practices that are tackling the 10 Root Causes of Poverty in Florida's 983 zip codes. Unite with us to ensure Florida is the first state in America where we cut childhood poverty in half.

**Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier** is confirmed as one of our keynote speakers, as is our **Florida Prosperity Initiative's Heather Cogar**. This event sells out, so be sure to register now at [flchamber.com/events](http://flchamber.com/events).

## HOW TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP

To take the next steps in getting involved with the Florida Prosperity Initiative, including leading a zip code, or adopting one of the 10 Root Causes of Poverty in your zip code, or joining our statewide advisory board, **please contact:**

**Kristina Donohue**

Director of Mission Advancement & Board Development  
Florida Chamber Foundation Florida Prosperity Initiative  
[kdonohue@flchamber.com](mailto:kdonohue@flchamber.com) | 850-661-3339

## THE FLORIDA PROSPERITY INITIATIVE ADVISORY BOARD IS GROWING

To help propel our efforts to replace childhood poverty and government dependency with prosperity, we are seeking business leaders and organizations to partner with us at the zip code, county, and state levels through our growing statewide advisory board.

If you and your company want to help us lead the effort to make Florida the first state to cut childhood poverty in half, inquire about joining our Florida Prosperity Initiative Advisory Board today!



**YOUR LOGO HERE**

Contact Kristina Donohue at [kdonohue@flchamber.com](mailto:kdonohue@flchamber.com) or 850-661-3339.

# THANK YOU TO OUR STATEWIDE ADVISORY BOARD



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