

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 1, 2025

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Office of Governor
State of Florida, The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor DeSantis:

We strongly and unequivocally oppose the construction of a temporary immigration detention facility at the Dade-Collier Training and Transition Airport site dubbed sarcastically as “Alligator Alcatraz” in the heart of the Everglades.

We are seriously concerned about the future treatment of immigrants at this facility. It is also important that we uplift grave concerns over the environmental and tribal impacts of your decision.

This site is ecologically sensitive, culturally sacred, and federally invested. It lies within the footprint of the Greater Everglades ecosystem and borders tribal lands, protected habitats, and federally funded restoration zones. The proposal to pave over this land for thousands of detainees, accompanied by heavy equipment, wastewater needs, and other disruptive infrastructure, fundamentally threatens decades of bipartisan progress to restore the Everglades.

Furthermore, the location lies on ancestral lands of the Miccosukee and Seminole Tribes of Florida. Proceeding without tribal consultation and consent violates the principles of tribal sovereignty, and dismisses the cultural, spiritual, and environmental significance of this land to Indigenous communities.

Miccosukee Chairman Talbert Cypress stated that the location is not “uninhabited wasteland for alligators and pythons, as some have suggested. The Big Cypress is the Tribe’s traditional homelands. The landscape has protected the Miccosukee and Seminole people for generations. . . the Big Cypress is part of us, and we are a part of it.”

It is about protecting Florida’s most iconic natural resource. It is about honoring the state and federal commitment to safeguarding the Everglades for future

generations. And it is about respecting tribal nations and their historic ties to this land.

Your framing of environmental concerns as “posturing” undermines the science, the law, and the communities that have spent generations fighting to protect this unique national treasure. In fact, the plans for the airport on this site were abandoned many years ago because the site was deemed too environmentally sensitive. As the National Parks Conservation Association stated, *“Building a prison in the Everglades threatens the integrity of America’s most ambitious ecosystem restoration project. The state should be looking for ways to protect this landscape, not destroy it.”*

And as the Everglades Foundation emphasized, *“America’s Everglades has a \$1 trillion asset value and it supports Florida’s robust real estate, tourism, and outdoor recreation industries.”*

We urge you to immediately reverse course, halt construction activity, and fully withdraw the proposal to establish any detention facility at the Dade-Collier site. We further request that you commit to a transparent and science-based environmental review process for any future development plans affecting the Everglades region.

Florida’s River of Grass is no place for a prison.

Sincerely,



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick
Member of Congress

Frederica S. Wilson

Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress

Kathy Castor

Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

Maxwell Frost

Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress