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Craig A. Hare, MBA, Paramedic
Director of EMS & Fire Administration
Pinellas County EMS & Fire Administration
12490 Ulmerton Road - Suite 134
Largo, Florida 33774

Reference: Support for Increased Water Rescue Funding

Director Craig Hare,

November 12, 2025

I am writing to express my strong support for increasing funding for the Marine Rescue Program from \$300,000 to \$400,000. This program has proven to be an essential lifeline for our coastal communities, and the proposed increase is both justified and urgently needed.

Marine Rescue teams are often the first—and sometimes only—responders in life-threatening situations on the water. Their rapid response capabilities, specialized training, and equipment have directly contributed to saving many lives. Whether it's swimmers caught in rip currents, boaters in distress, or flood victims, Marine Rescue has consistently demonstrated its value and effectiveness. This funding allows for better county-wide coordination, standardized equipment, technology improvements such as infrared and sonar, and programs like rapid diver. All necessities for successful operations.

The current funding level, while appreciated, is no longer sufficient to meet the growing demands placed on these teams. With increased coastal activity and population growth in waterfront areas, the need for well-equipped and adequately staffed rescue operations has never been greater. The additional \$100,000 would allow for critical upgrades in equipment, expanded training programs, and improved coverage during peak seasons—all of which translate directly into more lives saved.

This is not just an investment in infrastructure; it is an investment in human life. The Marine Rescue Program has already saved lives. With increased funding, it will save even more.

I urge you to approve the proposed funding increase and continue supporting the brave individuals who risk their lives to protect ours.

Sincerely,

Richard E. Graham, President
Pinellas County Fire Chiefs Association
Lealman Fire District
4360 55th Ave N
St. Petersburg, FL 33714