

Good afternoon Commissioners and staff,

I stand before you today in disbelief that we are once again here discussing the same issue we have brought before this Board since 2017.

I'm not only a constituent of Pinellas County, but the former owner of two family-operated towing companies — Elvis Towing and Transport and Knowtow 24hr Motorcycle Towing & Transport — serving this county since 1976. Like many towers in this room, we operated 24 hours a day through hurricanes, holidays, and even COVID as essential workers. Yet by the end of 2024, we were forced to close both companies. The issues we are discussing today played a major role in that outcome.

I have also stood before this Board for years representing the towing industry as First Vice President, and now President, of the Professional Wrecker Operators of Florida — Florida's state towing association since 1977.

The towing industry is part of public safety infrastructure in this county. We clear crashes for law enforcement, remove disabled and abandoned vehicles and vessels, assist motorists, enforce parking for businesses and residential communities, and respond day and night when called upon. We are the automotive and marine garbologists of Pinellas County — handling the problems nobody else wants to deal with.

But unlike many essential services, we are not government funded or subsidized. We are privately owned small businesses carrying massive operational costs while being heavily regulated.

Since 2017, the towing industry has acted in good faith. We have attended every meeting, provided every document requested, and supplied detailed information on truck costs, insurance increases, maintenance expenses, fuel, labor, and rate comparisons from counties throughout Florida. We have done everything asked of us to help make this process simple and transparent.

Yet year after year, we are told rates will be reviewed, rates will be addressed, and relief is coming — but nothing meaningful happens while our costs continue to rise.

At some point, this stops being a delay and becomes a failure of stewardship.

Pinellas County has not been a good steward to the towing industry that serves it.

Meanwhile, our industry continues to evolve. PWOFF works directly with legislators in Tallahassee, law enforcement agencies, and statewide stakeholders on issues affecting public safety and towing operations. Most recently, we assisted with House Bill 179 and ongoing Florida Administrative Code updates with the Florida Highway Patrol.

We are asking this Board for fairness, accountability, and action. Because without sustainable towing companies, the public safety services this county depends on will continue to disappear.

Thank you.