

ALACHUA • HIGH SPRINGS • NEWBERRY

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## One Mill on Ballot to Save Jobs, Programs in County Public Schools

*Special to The Observer*

As Alachua County voters begin sending in their ballots, one of the items they'll be voting on is the renewal of the One Mill, which is aimed at protecting teaching jobs, school nurses, technology and other programs in Alachua County Public Schools.

First approved by voters in 2008, then again in 2012 and

2016, the One Mill supports the jobs of more than 300 teachers, including art/music/band/chorus teachers, school counselors, librarians, career tech and magnet program teachers. It also guarantees a nurse in every school and is the district's primary source of funding for school technology. That includes the

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7000 plus laptops and 1000 hotspots distributed to local students since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Because of COVID, Alachua County Public Schools may lose more than \$16 million in funding this school year. The district has also spent millions of additional dollars on COVID-related expenses, including PPE and staff training. Because most of the district's funding goes towards salaries, such significant budget cuts and extra expenses would certainly lead to job losses.

Superintendent Karen Clarke said the One Mill will help lessen the impact of those cuts.

"All the people and programs funded through the One Mill are critical to our success as a district," said Clarke.

"We don't want our students to lose access to any of them because there isn't enough funding."

If approved, the One Mill is projected to raise about \$17 million per year for the next four years. The ballot language specifies how the revenues can be spent, and requires that an independent citizens' oversight committee continue to review all expenditures.

More information about the One Mill, including the ballot language, answers to frequently asked questions and links to registration information and sample ballots on the Supervisor of Elections website.

The One Mill website is located at: <https://fl02219191.schoolwires.net/Page/30131>.