



**For Immediate Release**

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## **CARE FL RELEASES 2018 CANDIDATE REPORT CARD: HIGH SPEED RAIL SAFETY CONCERNS GROWING AMONG LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL CANDIDATES**

**Stuart, FL**—As residents of the Treasure Coast region prepare to cast their ballots in the upcoming primary election, Citizens Against Rail Expansion in Florida (CARE FL) today released the results of its 2018 Candidate Report Card. CARE FL sent the survey to candidates seeking federal, state and local seats in the region to determine where they stand on rail expansion in Florida.

Of note is that out of the 36 candidates who responded to CARE FL's survey, eight were recognized as "**Champions**" while 22 received A's, five received B's and one candidate received a C. To view the report card, please click [here](#).

"We are pleased so many incumbents and candidates are finally echoing the public safety concerns that have been expressed by so many members in our communities," said Brent Hanlon, Chairman of the CARE FL Steering Committee. "This is more than a regional issue, and there should be nothing more important than the safety of Florida's residents, and visitors alike. We applaud the elected officials who have steadfastly stood with us – and for that they are recognized in this report card as Champions."

CARE FL recognized candidates who through their past actions, while in office, have demonstrated a commitment to protecting the safety and way of life for families living in the affected regions as "Champions."

The candidates recognized as Champions in 2018 include:

- Congressmen Bill Posey and Brian Mast
- State Representatives Erin Grall, Gayle Harrell and MaryLynn Magar
- Indian River County Commissioners Peter O'Bryan and Joseph Flescher
- Stuart City Commissioner Troy McDonald

CARE FL's candidate survey asked 12 questions that were qualitative, and allowed for additional comments, providing an opportunity for individuals running for office in the regions impacted by All Aboard Florida (AAF) /Brightline to outline their stances on the rail expansion project and explain the reasoning behind their beliefs.

To date there have been eight fatalities and multiple injuries involving AAF/Brightline trains. Treasure Coast residents are understandably concerned about the impact these high speed trains will have on their pedestrian downtowns. Additionally, first responders are also concerned about an increase in passenger and freight rail traffic, as they already experience delays in response time due to existing freight trains that pass through their communities.

"We believe these scores will help inform voters as they cast their ballots in the upcoming election," said Jane Feinstein, a member of the CARE FL Steering Committee who serves as the chairman of the group's survey initiative. "For many residents in our region, a candidate's position on high speed rail is a deciding factor. We need to ensure that our elected officials know that keeping our communities safe is a top priority."

CARE FL sent the survey to candidates for U.S. Senate, U.S. House of Representatives, Governor, the Florida Legislature, and county and city commissions in Martin, Indian River, and St. Lucie Counties.

"Given the importance of this issue and the recent announcement that high speed rail may be expanded even further in our state, it is disappointing that all but one of the statewide candidates who received the survey, chose not to respond," added Feinstein.

In fact, only Miami Beach Mayor Philip Levine, a Democratic candidate for Governor, completed the survey. Mayor Levine received an "A."

Both candidates running for U.S. Senate—incumbent Senator Bill Nelson and current Governor Rick Scott—failed to respond, despite repeated outreach to their campaigns. Throughout his tenure in office, the actions of Governor Scott and his Administration have been supportive of the AAF/Brightline project, including more than \$200 million in state funds for AAF's Orlando train station, as well as the failure of FDOT to respond to our communities' safety concerns and inquiries. Given Sen. Nelson's prominent position on the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation, CARE FL is disappointed that he chose not to participate in the survey.

CARE FL made several attempts by email and phone to encourage all candidates to submit their responses.

While some candidates were ultimately elected without opposition, they chose to respond to the survey and are also included in this report card.

Additionally, while some of our Champions are not up for reelection this cycle, CARE FL would like to recognize Senator Debbie Mayfield, the Martin County Board of County Commissioners, and the Indian River County Board of County Commissioners for all their continued support on this issue.

For more information about CARE FL, please visit [www.saveourfl.com](http://www.saveourfl.com) or like us on [Facebook](#).



## CARE FL 2018 Candidate Report Card

### LOCAL

\*Joseph Flescher, Indian River BOCC, District 2 – FINAL GRADE: Champion

\*Peter O'Bryan, Indian River BOCC, District 4 – FINAL GRADE: Champion

\*Anthony Bonna, St. Lucie County BOCC, District 2 – FINAL GRADE: A

Sean Mitchell, St. Lucie County BOCC, District 2 – FINAL GRADE: A

James Taylor, St. Lucie County BOCC, District 2 – FINAL GRADE: A

\*Frances "Frannie" Hutchinson, St. Lucie County BOCC, District 4 – FINAL GRADE: A

Joe Banfi, Martin County BOCC, District 2 – FINAL GRADE: A

Stacey Hetherington, Martin County BOCC, District 2 – FINAL GRADE: B

Caryn Hall Yost-Rudge, Martin County BOCC, District 2 – FINAL GRADE: A

\*Sarah Heard, Martin County BOCC, District 4 – FINAL GRADE: A

Harold Markey, Martin County BOCC, District 4 – FINAL GRADE: A

Niki Norton, Martin County BOCC, District 4 – FINAL GRADE: A

Michael Meier, Stuart City Commission, Group 1 – FINAL GRADE: A

William "Merritt" Matheson, Stuart City Commission, Group 3 – FINAL GRADE: A

\*Troy McDonald, Stuart City Commission, Group 3 – FINAL GRADE: Champion

### STATE

Philip Levine, Governor - FINAL GRADE: A

Gayle Harrell, Florida Senate, District 25 – FINAL GRADE: Champion

Belinda Keiser, Florida Senate, District 25 – FINAL GRADE: A

Robert Levy, Florida Senate, District 25 – FINAL GRADE: A

Rubin Anderson, Florida Senate, District 30 – FINAL GRADE: A

\*Erin Grall, Florida House, District 54 – FINAL GRADE: Champion

Nicole Haagenson, Florida House, District 54 – FINAL GRADE: B

\*MaryLynn Magar, Florida House, District 82 – FINAL GRADE: Champion

Edward O'Connor, Florida House, District 82 – FINAL GRADE: B

Sasha Dadan, Florida House, District 83 – FINAL GRADE: A

Toby Overdorf, Florida House, District 83 – FINAL GRADE: A

Matt Theobald, Florida House, District 83 – FINAL GRADE: A

Forest Blanton, Florida House, District 84 – FINAL GRADE: B  
Kim Johnson, Florida House, District 84 – FINAL GRADE: B  
Robert Joseph, Florida House, District 84 – FINAL GRADE: A  
Theresa “Teri” Pinney, Florida House, District 84 – FINAL GRADE: A

Samson LeBeau Kpadenou, Florida House, District 87 – FINAL GRADE: C

**FEDERAL**

\*Bill Posey, U.S. Representative, District 8 – FINAL GRADE: Champion

Lauren Baer, U.S. Representative, District 18 – FINAL GRADE: A

Mark Freeman, U.S. Representative, District 18 – FINAL GRADE: A

\*Brian Mast, U.S. Representative, District 18 – FINAL GRADE: Champion

*(\*) Denotes Incumbent*