

# Comments from Jacobi Bedenfield Regarding Alachua County Rural Concerns Advisory Committee Appointment

To the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners,

I am writing to express my sincere belief that I am exceptionally qualified and dedicated to serving on the Alachua County Rural Concerns Advisory Committee. My commitment to the rural community, deep-rooted experience in the agriculture industry, and ongoing pursuit of academic excellence uniquely positions me to contribute effectively to the committee's objectives.

My journey in agriculture and rural advocacy began during my formative years as a member of the National FFA Organization, formerly known as the Future Farmers of America. This pivotal experience instilled in me a profound appreciation for agriculture's fundamental role in our society. It also nurtured my leadership skills, culminating in my service as a state officer and subsequent roles as both a state and national alumni board member. Through these experiences, I gained invaluable insights into the diverse challenges facing rural communities and agriculture.

Presently, I hold a full-time position at the University of Florida and serve as a part-time professor at Santa Fe College. These roles have allowed me to engage with students and the broader community, fostering a strong connection with the issues affecting rural Alachua County. My professional endeavors have honed my ability to communicate complex ideas effectively and collaborate with diverse stakeholders, both essential qualities for a successful committee member.

Furthermore, I am currently pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in agricultural education and communication, specializing in agricultural leadership. My research endeavors are consistently centered on addressing the most pressing challenges facing our communities and the agriculture industry. Through rigorous academic inquiry, I am actively seeking solutions to enhance the sustainability, resilience, and vitality of rural areas.

As a member of the Alachua County Rural Concerns Advisory Committee, I would work with committee members and the rural citizens of the county to address a wide range of issues and challenges that are vital to the well-being and sustainability of rural communities in the county. Here are some key issues I would like to work on with the committee:

1. **Agriculture and Farming:** Given my background in the agriculture industry, we could address issues related to farming practices, land use, sustainable agriculture, and access to resources for local farmers. Advocating for policies that support the growth and resilience of rural agricultural enterprises would be essential.
2. **Rural Infrastructure:** Rural areas often face infrastructure challenges such as road maintenance, broadband access, and utilities. We could work on initiatives to improve infrastructure in these communities, helping them stay connected and economically competitive.

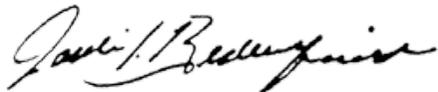
3. **Economic Development:** Promoting economic development in rural areas is crucial. We could explore strategies to attract new businesses, support small enterprises, and create jobs locally, ultimately strengthening the economic foundation of rural communities.
4. **Education and Training:** Leveraging my academic background, I could advocate for improved access to education and training opportunities in rural areas. This might include programs that focus on agricultural education, workforce development, and skill-building.
5. **Healthcare Access:** Access to healthcare services can be limited in rural areas. Advocating for improved healthcare access, telemedicine options, and the retention of healthcare professionals in rural communities should be a priority.
6. **Environmental Conservation:** Rural areas often have unique ecosystems and natural resources. We could champion efforts to protect and conserve these resources, ensuring that our rural communities maintain their environmental integrity.
7. **Housing and Housing Affordability:** Addressing housing issues in rural areas, including affordability and availability, can be a significant concern. Initiatives to promote affordable housing and address homelessness could be part of the committee's agenda.
8. **Community Engagement and Outreach:** Building a strong sense of community and promoting civic engagement is vital. We could work on projects that bring residents together, such as community events, outreach programs, and volunteer opportunities.
9. **Emergency Preparedness:** Our rural areas may face specific challenges during emergencies. Developing and promoting emergency preparedness plans tailored to rural communities can enhance their resilience in the face of disasters.
10. **Transportation:** Rural residents often rely heavily on personal vehicles. We could explore transportation options that provide mobility for those without access to cars and ensure that rural areas are well-connected.
11. **Cultural Preservation:** Many of our rural communities have rich cultural histories. We could support efforts to preserve and celebrate these cultural traditions and landmarks.
12. **Land Use and Zoning:** Advocating for responsible land use and zoning policies that protect rural character and prevent overdevelopment can be crucial.

My unique blend of experience, leadership skills, and academic pursuits equips me to address these issues effectively, making a significant impact on the well-being and future of rural communities in Alachua County.

In conclusion, my multifaceted background, spanning hands-on experience in agriculture, leadership roles, academic endeavors, and active community involvement, equips me with the knowledge, dedication, and passion necessary to contribute meaningfully to the Alachua County Rural Concerns Advisory Committee. I am eager to collaborate with committee members, the Board of County

Commissioners, and residents to address the unique needs and opportunities of rural Alachua County and to help shape a prosperous future for this vital community. Thank you for your consideration.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jacobi Bedenfield". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some loops and flourishes.

Jacobi Bedenfield