In the U.S., films continue to gain massive influence in pop culture. In 2015, U.S. films made approximately $11.6 billion in the domestic market. As the market continues to grow, it is impossible to deny the massive financial impact of the film industry. However, another important part of films that get overlooked is their ability to represent people, places, and ideas. While most research shows that tax incentive programs for film production bring negative returns to the state, it is also important to see how films represent the state.

As the Florida legislature is about to decide whether to fund a tax incentive program for film production, it is crucial to see how Florida is represented in popular cinema. If the state of Florida wants to lose money financing films, it had better be represented well through them. Creating a positive image of Florida through film could potentially help the tourism industry, but more importantly, a continued negative image of Florida in culture could severely detract from the money that tourists bring.

Of films released over the last four years (2015-18), only three major movies were primarly produced and set in Florida: *Moonlight*, *The Florida Project*, and *Ride Along 2*. As well, a fourth film, *War Dogs*, shot approximately a 1/4th of its runtime in Florida. All of these films coincidentally were produced before 2016, when the $297 million tax incentive program ran out of funding, meaning that the film industry completely dropped all production once the money was gone. More importantly, these films do not represent Florida in a positive light.

*Moonlight* focuses on the story of Chiron, a young gay black man from Liberty City, Miami. Much of the narrative shows how Chiron’s life is affected by the low-income status of his upbringing as well as the underground drug market. *The Florida Project* takes place at a low-rent motel in Kissimmee that is contrasted with the nearby splendor of Disneyworld. *Ride Along 2* reinforces negative stereotypes that Miami is run by underground crime as it’s story focuses on two Atlanta-based cops coming to Miami to stop a crime lord. Is this the kind of representation Florida not only wants to encourage, but give money to? It isn’t a problem for these movies to exist, but Florida should in no way pay for them.

While only three films set in Florida were primarily produced in Florida, at least 13 other films feature the state in their narratives. These films take place in states like Georgia, New York, Louisiana, and more. Even without incentivizing production in the state, filmmakers continue to feature Florida prominently in their works. While not always a positive portrayal, Florida’s government does not have to pay anything for these films. If other states want to pay studios to create films about Florida, so be it. Until our state government can ensure that taxpayer funds won’t go to films that disparage the state, Florida should discontinue it’s tax incentive program for film production.