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August 16, 2013

Florida Housing Finance Corporation
227 North Bronough St.
Suite 5000
Tallahassee, FL 32301
Att: Nancy Muller, Policy Director

Ms. Muller,

Our Development Director, Debbie Sokolov, attended the recent public workshop at the Tampa Airport Marriott and spoke with you afterwards regarding the Request for Applications to Develop Housing for Homeless Persons and Families. It is refreshing that you are requesting, from potential beneficiary agencies, information pertaining to the criteria.

I understand the housing types to be funded are currently stated to range from one to fifteen units. This would apparently preclude St. Petersburg Free Clinic from submitting an application for construction of a women's residence with 40 bedrooms that would otherwise seem a very good fit for funding.

The most recent information provided by Tampa Bay Information Network is that there are more than 2500 homeless women in Pinellas County. Our Women's Residence Program has been operating since 1989 and is the only one of its kind in Pinellas County. The Director of our transitional Women's Residence receives approximately 1,800 inquiries annually yet can only house 18 residents at a time.

Determining the appropriate number of units for the new construction was completed by convening a Women's Residence task force comprised of past and present advocates for homelessness and collaborating with local organizations that service and house homeless individuals. As a result, a specific plan that will produce the highest rate of success for transitioning from homelessness to independence was created which included an ideal number of bedrooms for 40 residents to be built on the property of the current Women's Residence. The parties involved are confident this capacity will address the current gap in services and provide the greatest results. Additionally, this sizing creates a more efficient model for supportive services.

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Food - Shelter - Health Care

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Since 1970, St. Petersburg Free Clinic has been helping individuals and families who fall through the gaps of other programs with the basic needs of food, shelter, and healthcare through eight essential programs: Health Center, Dental Clinic, Food Bank, We Help Services, Community Kitchen, Beacon House (men's transitional housing), Women's Residence (transitional housing) and Family Residence (homeless shelter). The health care services and food support are available to the residents and are in close proximity to the Women's Residence. There is a great need in the community, the property is available for construction of the new Women's Residence, preliminary drawings have been made, and a beginning number of donor pledges have been made.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and St. Petersburg Free Clinic, I request that the parties involved in compiling the Request for Applications to Develop Housing for Homeless Persons and Families reconsider the housing types to include new construction for this 40 bedroom project. That would be 22 additional women from the 2500 homeless women in Pinellas County who would be provided a home and the support to become independent.

If you have any questions, please contact me or Debbie Sokolov, Director of Development at 727-821-1200.

Sincerely,



Beth A. Houghton
Executive Director

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