

From: [Linda Kramer](#)
To: [Zach Summerlin](#)
Subject: Florida Housing
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Attachments: [LWVPBC Letterhead 2019.docx](#)

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July 19, 2023

Florida Housing Finance Corporation

c/o Zach Summerlin

Via e-mail: Zach.Summerlin@Floridahousing.org

Re: Support for the Statewide Permanent Supportive Housing Workgroup

The League of Women Voters of Palm Beach County is grateful to the Florida Housing Finance Corporation for establishing, convening, overseeing, and inviting stakeholders to participate and collaborate in the statewide permanent supportive housing workgroup to create a State Plan to provide supportive housing for Florida's vulnerable populations, including those with serious mental illness and often co-occurring substance use disorders.

LWVPBC mission is encourage informed and active participation in government, increase understanding of major policy issues and support advocacy for legislative changes and policies for the public good in Palm Beach County. We understand the critical need for more permanent supportive housing as a top priority.

The *2022 Florida Cultural Health Disparity and Behavioral Health Needs Assessment, An Analysis of the Managing Entity Behavioral Health System of Care*, p. 27, identified 676,982 adults with serious mental illness living in Florida in 2020. Many receive only Social Security income of \$914 per month and are unable to pay affordable housing rental rates. They may not meet the HUD criteria for homelessness but are *at risk* of homelessness. Supportive housing is a prerequisite for their recovery, allowing treatment to be effective.

Long-term sustainable funding through a Supportive Housing Trust Fund that includes some funding for health and wellness services would:

- Reduce homelessness.
- Decrease hospitalizations.
- Prevent incarcerations.
- Encourage re-entry into the workforce and volunteerism
- Significantly reduce costs of behavioral health care
- Reduce stigma of mental illness by integration into the community
- Support recovery and restore lives.

As evidenced by 2018 results from the pilot programs in Miami-Dade, Duval, and Pinellas Counties, providing supportive housing to individuals experiencing housing instability and utilizing an abundance of crisis services showed success in avoiding the costs of victimization, criminalization, hospitalization, emergency, and homeless services. Appropriately placed, individuals with SMI have opportunities to live lives of dignity and productivity. Additionally, state and local governments may reinvest the savings in rental assistance and other community housing supports.

Again, thank you very much for leading this promising initiative!

Kathi Gundlach

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