

From: [Jackie Fernandez](#)
To: [Zach Summerlin](#)
Cc: [Susan Holtzman](#)
Subject: Letter of Support - NAMI Miami-Dade County
Date: Thursday, July 20, 2023 12:56:15 PM
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Good afternoon, Mr. Summerlin—

Attached and below please find a letter of support from our President & CEO Susan Holtzman on behalf of NAMI Miami-Dade County.

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

Dear Mr. Summerlin:

NAMI Miami-Dade 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.

NAMI Miami-Dade has made it its mission to destigmatize mental illness and provide resources and support to those with mental health challenges, as well as their families. Our advocacy efforts, helpline, youth programming, as well as support groups and education programs have a broad reach in the Miami-Dade and Monroe communities. In our advocacy efforts, we consistently identify 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 they 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; and 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 placing individuals with serious mental illness creates opportunities for these individuals to live lives of dignity and productivity. Additionally, state and local governments may reinvest the savings in rental assistance and other community housing supports.

Thank you for leading this promising and important initiative.

With gratitude,

Susan O. Holtzman

Susan O. Holtzman
President & CEO
NAMI Miami-Dade County
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