

January 26, 2021

Dear Friends at Florida Housing Finance Corporation,

After reviewing draft RFA 2021-106, we were disheartened to read the following under Section B.2.2 "Goals" on page 66 or 133:

"The Corporation has a goal to fund one Development that selected the Demographic Commitment of Persons with Developmental Disabilities."

While we recognize and understand the need for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) for the community of Persons with Developmental Disabilities (DD), the effect of this "Goals" clause under Section B "Scoring" favors the DD community over those with Disabling Conditions (DC) in this RFA. It is a shame there are not sufficient funds for both vulnerable populations. The same Goal existed in last year's RFA. While there was HC money found to fund the DC development last year, there is no guarantee that will happen this year.

As advocates for those with Serious Mental Illness (SMI), we feel this goal is fundamentally unfair. Many of us are aging family members whose greatest fear is what will happen to our loved ones with SMI after we are gone. According to the National Institute on Mental Health (NIMH--[link to NIMH stats](#)), 5.2% of U.S. adults have a SMI, and there were 13.1 million Americans living with SMI in 2019.

In contrast, estimates on those living with DD range from 7.9 per 1,000 of US adults, or 0.79% ([Article: A Systematic Review of US Studies on the Prevalence of Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities since 2000](#)), to 2.5% of the general population or "Up to 7.7 million people who may have at least a mild developmental disability that affects their life in some way." ([HRF: 39 Incredible Developmentally Disabled Statistics](#)).

There is no reason to believe that the percentages in Florida are significantly different than those nationwide. While there is no question that autism spectrum disorder is growing and the prevalence of DD is greater among those under 18 years old than it is in today's adults, the present RFA deals with today's adult population. It is apparent by any statistical comparison that just the SMI population among those adults living with Disabling Conditions is 200%-500% greater than those who are Developmentally Disabled. It is simply unfair to give the DD population preference in the present RFA 2021-106 process.

At the workshop for the 2021-106 RFA, in response to a question posed by a NAMI representative about the reason for this B.2.2 "Goals" DD first-in-line statement regarding the Corporation's *Demographic Commitment of Persons with Developmental Disabilities*, FHFC responded that this arises from a statutory requirement. We request that you clarify (a) what the statutory requirement is and where we can find it, and (b) whether it is

possible that this requirement could be fulfilled by RFA 2021-105 so that the first development funded through RFA 2021-106 would simply be the best one from any demographic community in the RFA, rather than being reserved exclusively for those with Developmental Disabilities.

In the 2021-106 workshop, you stated that, despite a similar DD-first goal last year, FHFC did find additional funding for DC (which includes the SMI population). We do appreciate the fact that you found a total of \$5.02M in competitive HC funding when only \$2.98M was projected in RFA 2020-106, and that two of the three developments funded were for those with Disabling Conditions. Nonetheless, neither of the DC projects funded was close to the maximum HC amounts in 2021-106 (p.41) for (a) Broward and Miami-Dade (\$2.882M) or (b) Hillsborough, Orange, or Palm Beach County (\$2.375M), although the combined total of the two was. However, the smaller HC award to a Leon County DD project (at \$1.62M HC) was necessary in order to provide significant DC funding, even with the \$5.02M found last year. There is no reason to assume that will be the case in 2021, nor that the significantly greater competitive HC funding found last year will be found again in 2021.

We regret competing against other vulnerable populations at all, but we must ask that our equally vulnerable and more numerous SMI (DC) population be given equal standing in RFA process 2021-106. We ask that you please remove the B.2.2 Goal from 2021-106 and allow equal consideration be given to qualified Disabling Conditions proposals.

Thank you for your attention to, and consideration of, our request.

Best Regards,

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