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Sent: Thursday, October 7, 2021 11:15 AM

To: Jean Salmonsens <Jean.Salmonsens@floridahousing.org>; Marisa.Button@floridahousing.org

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Subject: Public Comment for SAIL grant 2021-2022

Greetings,

H.O.M.E.S., Inc. was founded in 1998. Since May 2009 we have operated an At-Risk Youth Self-Sufficiency & Supportive Housing Program for youth 18 – 24 years of age who were formerly in foster care, relative care, or homeless. This Program was designed and run with HANDY as an essential partner from the beginning, and is as holistic as possible: extremely low-cost furnished apartments, life coaches, financial literacy training, transportation vouchers, and meaningful connections with health, mental health, and day care services with reduced or no fees; and requirements for school attendance, part-time work (or paid internships provided by H.O.M.E.S. and HANDY), no drug use, and getting along with roommates and neighbors in the H.O.M.E.S. complex. The Youth Program goal is to assist these young adults to become self-sufficient, both financially and emotionally. Since that time we have added a unit of housing to be used temporarily for alumni youth in urgent housing need.

Our partner HANDY, Inc. was founded in 1985. HANDY serves abused, neglected, and disadvantaged children in and around the dependency system; the families of these highly at-risk children; and such youth 18 – 24 years old who have “aged out” of foster and relative care. The HANDY LIFE Program currently provides 1,300+ at-risk youth and their families (ages 9 – 24) annually with hands-on life skills training, independent living assistance, youth development services, mentoring linkages, employability skills training, placement, and paid internships, individual case management, scholarships, and educational placement and tutoring. The goal of the HANDY Life Program is to enable youth to remain in school, understand their higher education and employment options, and to learn to make positive choices in order to break the cycle of poverty and/or abuse.

As collaborating organizations with deep experience providing supportive services to youth, we recognize that the model of Affordable Youth Housing in a Campus setting with On-Site Wrap-Around Services, such as provided by H.O.M.E.S. and HANDY, has a proven track record of success for at-risk youth. Accordingly, we find the requirements of RFA 2022-102 are properly restrictive and will ensure for a transition for the youths. I believe this RFA is focused on the model to empower youth on a campus that will provide the best opportunity for the youths to succeed as adults. **Obtaining Self Sufficiency** is the primary goal for these youth!

Because youth continue to age out of the system and graduates from our programs face challenges finding affordable housing, we encourage consideration of options for us to provide continued housing to them as they prepare to launch their lives as adults.

Thank you in advance for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Linda Taylor



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