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To: ken.reecy@floridahousing.org; Trey Price <Trey.Price@floridahousing.org>

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Subject: Recommendations for RFA 2018-101 Supportive Housing

Dear Mr. Reece and Mr. Price,

Our organization, The Key Clubhouse of South Florida, provides a Clubhouse program of rehabilitation and employment placement services for low-income adults living with serious mental illness in Miami-Dade County. We are accredited by [Clubhouse International](#), a network of more than 320 Clubhouses in 34 countries around the world that follow the same internationally acclaimed model. This program has been shown to reduce the need for hospitalization, result in higher-paying, longer term employment, and reduce the rate of interaction with law enforcement among people with serious mental illnesses. In the last two years, we have placed more than 70 individuals (whom we call “members”) with serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depressive disorder, schizoaffective disorder and PTSD, in jobs in the community. We offer a level of social, pre-vocational, and employment support to our members that is unsurpassed by any other outpatient mental health program.

At the same time, our program is extremely economical, at a cost of about \$3,500 per member per year. This is because our members help to operate the Clubhouse alongside our staff in a healing work environment. We do not charge anything to our members, who can participate in the Clubhouse at no cost (except for a nominal fee for meals prepared by and for members), five days a week, year-round, including major holidays. Our organization is supported by state and county funding, foundation grants, and individual contributions. We are members of the South Florida Behavioral Health Network, the Managing Entity for state-funded behavioral health services in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, whose board I also serve on.

Since we opened Key Clubhouse in 2010, one of our ultimate goals has been to create supportive housing for our Clubhouse members. Supportive housing is part of the international program model we follow and many Clubhouse throughout the world offer this. Our board of directors has been diligently working to achieve this goal in the next few years as housing for our Clubhouse members has become an extremely urgent issue. There is virtually no affordable supportive housing available for individuals with serious mental illness in Miami-Dade County. Our homeless shelters are full and apartment rental rates have skyrocketed, making it impossible for a person living on SSI or SSDI to afford any apartment anywhere. The situation here is dire. This has led to a tragic cycling of individuals in and out of jail, crisis stabilization units and homeless shelters. Our members who struggle with homelessness cannot

achieve any mental health stability without a safe place to live. Homelessness interferes with their ability to become productive adults and join the workforce, not to mention just survive.

We are very much interested in applying for funds through the Florida Housing Finance Corporation as a new housing developer for special needs, low-income tenants, including our Clubhouse members. Some of the past criteria for RFA-101 are not conducive to the present land and housing situation in Miami-Dade County, especially for nonprofits such as ourselves.

The following are our recommendations for the upcoming RFA 2018-101 Supportive Housing:

- Reduce the nonprofit application fee to \$1,000 (it is now \$3,000) to encourage more nonprofits to apply
- Allow the donation of land to be part of the matching requirement for the Supportive Housing RFA
- Allow Supportive Housing developments to include mid-rise developments (up to 6 stories) instead of limited them to garden style apartments. In Miami-Dade County, land is so expensive, it is much easier to build up rather than out.
- Allow Supportive Housing developments to be part of larger projects, so that people with disabilities have a chance to live with a mix of people, rather than be limited to other people with disabilities. This makes it easier to support the project financially in the long run and creates a better living environment for all.
- General recommendation: Consider adults living with serious mental illness as a target group for special funding projects, just as you do for adults with development disabilities. Individuals with serious mental illness comprise about 5% of the total population. When these individuals do not have access to appropriate support services and housing, there is a resounding economic impact on publicly funded homeless services, the criminal justice system, family services, and disability and entitlement services, not to mention the social and emotional impact on their families. Supportive housing and services like ours can make a huge difference.

It would seem that the Florida Finance Housing Corporation would want to encourage more nonprofits such as ours to develop special needs supportive housing in high-need communities. We are able to create an apartment complex with in-house support services and, as a nonprofit with a mission to assist a special needs population, are not concerned with making a profit and are more likely to sustain low-rent, supportive apartments for our target population far longer than a for-profit developer.

Thank you for considering these recommendations.

Amy McClellan
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