

# COMMON VISION 2008 HOUSING FOR ALL FLORIDIANS

## ADVOCACY AGENDA

### Provide Funding Needs for State-Funded Homeless Assistance Programs

Homeless assistance programs are 1) cost effective and efficient and 2) directly reduce the strain on other publicly-funded systems including corrections and healthcare.

- **Restore funding to local homeless coalitions** at the 06-07 level of \$700,000.  
Local Coalitions successfully brought \$56.2 million of federal homeless program funding into Florida in 06-07.
- **Restore Challenge Grant Funding** to the 00-01 funding level of \$3.8 million.  
Would provide assistance – including homeless prevention – to an additional 24,000 Floridians at an average cost per person of \$70.50 through this program.
- **Preserve Homeless Housing Assistance Grant Funding** at the 07- 08 level of \$7 million.  
Would allow at least 450 new transitional and permanent housing units for homeless persons to be built.
- **Increase Emergency Financial Assistance for Housing Program** funding by \$1 million, for total budget of \$2.8 million, from general revenue.

### Direct Policy and Funding for Extremely-Low Income Housing

- More than **1 million Floridian ELI households** earn less than **\$16,333** a year (30% of FL AMI).
- This is less than 50% of FL's **current housing wage of \$34,000**.
- **ELI households include:** families with children, CNAs, child care workers, hotel clerks, cashiers, housekeepers, school bus drivers, elderly and disabled persons.
- ELI households **have the greatest housing needs** and are at the **greatest risk of becoming homeless** in Florida.
- **In 2005, only 3%** of state-assisted rental property funding targeted these Floridians with the greatest need.

**Housing policy needs to direct funding specifically to provide housing for extremely low income, homeless and special needs households.**

### Preserve the Sadowski Housing Trust Act and Repeal the Cap

- More than **60,000 men, women and children are homeless in FL**; tens of thousands precariously housed individuals and families cannot find an affordable place to live.
- **Workers critical to the state's tourism industries**, teachers, medical personnel and struggle to pay unaffordable rents and mortgages along with other basic needs.
- For every \$1 million of state funding for housing, **over \$6.05 million** of housing is built and/or sold.
- Florida **has lost an estimated \$2.4 billion** in economic activity this year.
- At full appropriation in FY 07/07, an additional **20,904 families could have been housed**.

**Florida has the resources to address the housing crisis - but only if the Sadowski Housing Trust Fund is reauthorized and the cap scrapped.**

For more information about these items contact:  
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## Revise the Definition of Homelessness

- Revise the definition of “homelessness” used in section 420.621(4), F.S. to:
  - \* **a common definition** used by all state agency programs
  - \* **DCF and DOE** currently have **different definitions** of ‘homelessness’
  - \* to **eliminate barriers** to assistance, and
  - \* **make it easier for families with children** to get assistance without having to literally live on the street.

### This change is supported by:

- \* DCF Council on Homelessness,
- \* 27 homeless coalitions in Florida, and
- \* several national policy and advocacy organizations.

## Repeal the Habitual Misdemeanor Offender Law

- The law, (s. 755.0837, F.S.), is an additional tool aiding the trend of **criminalization of homelessness**.
- Adoption of laws and policies that punish homeless people rather than addressing the problems that cause homelessness is **an ineffective approach**.
- In lieu of addressing the true need of discharge planning or supportive housing for persons without homes, the law simply locks away vulnerable people **caught in the criminal justice “revolving door” simply because they are homeless**.
- This is supported by the **Florida Bar Public Interest Law Section**.

## Protect Homeless People from Violence

- Add homeless status to Florida’s current Hate Crimes Statue, Section 775.085, F.S. to deter crimes against homeless people.
  - \* Florida is ranked as the **Meanest State in the Country** by the National Coalition for the Homeless.
  - \* There were **3 times more reported acts of violence against homeless people** in Florida (48) than in Arizona (16), the state with the second highest number of attacks in 2006.
  - \* The majority of violent acts against homeless people are **committed by someone who intentionally and deliberately chooses** a homeless person as their victim, making these bias-motivated crimes.
  - \* There is **no significant financial impact** on the Dept. of Corrections per the Criminal Justice Impact Conference in 2007.

## Improve Assistance Programs, including Supportive Housing for Persons with Mental Illness and Substance disorder through Policy and Funding Changes

- Florida is **ranked 35<sup>th</sup>** in per capita spending on **substance abuse programs**.
- **Only 42%** of Florida’s Adults with severe / persistent mental illness **needs are currently being met**.
- **72% of Florida’s jail inmates** have a mental illness or substance abuse disorder.
- **Redirect the focus** of spending on the front-end of the system (diversion, prevention and early intervention), because it is less costly and avoids the more expensive incarceration option.
- **Adequately fund community mental health and substance abuse treatment services and supportive housing** to avoid more costly state-funding residential juvenile commitment and adult prison beds.