



Responding to the Needs of the Community

## NEWS RELEASE

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**Editors Note:** Coalition CEO to be part of homeless legislative needs press conference in Tallahassee, Fla. on Wednesday, March 29, 2006 at 9:30 a.m. in Knott Building, room 117.

### **Homeless Coalition Members To Lawmakers: ‘Lay the Foundation for Affordable Housing’**

TAMPA, Fla. – (Friday, March 24, 2006) – In response to growing homeless populations in Hillsborough County and throughout Florida perpetuated by the lack of affordable housing, local homeless advocates and providers will take their concerns and voices to Tallahassee as part of the Florida Coalition for the Homeless annual Homeless Legislative Day on Wednesday, March 29, 2006. They will start the day with a press conference at 9:30 a.m. in the Capitol Center, Knott building, room 117 and then meet with representatives and senators throughout the day.

“The lack of affordable housing is one of the main reasons homelessness in our community and the state continues to increase,” said Rayme L. Nuckles, chief executive officer of the Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County and vice-president of the Florida Coalition for the Homeless. “We are encouraged by the attention affordable housing is receiving from all levels of the community and we hope this is the year our legislators will lay the foundation for affordable housing for every Floridian.”

Much of the affordable housing discussions have focused on ‘workforce housing,’ yet, Nuckles is concerned the policy and appropriations decisions by lawmakers won’t go far enough for the neediest households.

“Not only do our teachers and firefighters need to be able to afford housing in our state, so do our cooks, office clerks, janitors and maids who are the backbone to our service economy in Florida and make far less than a ‘housing wage’” said Nuckles.

According to the 2005 Out of Reach Report by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the area median income (AMI) in Florida is \$52,959; while the AMI in Hillsborough County is \$52,150. Based on the standard definition of affordable housing, where a household spends no more than 30 percent off their income on housing costs, a person must earn \$15.68 an hour in Florida or \$16.12 per hour in Hillsborough County to be able to afford fair market rental rates.

For example, a person making minimum wage will earn only \$10,700 a year and therefore can only afford to pay less than \$300 a month for housing. Yet fair market rental rates in Hillsborough County for a 2-bedroom apartment is \$805, nearly three times what a minimum-wage earner can afford. This person must work 106 hours per week to be able to afford an apartment in Hillsborough County.

HCHC members are particularly interested in and supportive of legislation to restore full funding to the Sadowski Housing trust fund and which designates 30 percent of the rental housing units developed through public funds administered by the State target extremely-low income (ELI) persons at or below 30 percent of the area median income.

Extremely-low income households have an annual income of less than \$15,000 and represent 60 percent of the housing need. They are our service workers – cooks, maids, office clerks, childcare workers and janitors, our elderly and disabled citizens, our children and youth. Yet only one percent of the rental units developed have been targeted to these Floridians with the greatest housing needs.

The 2002 data from the *Florida Housing Data Clearinghouse of the Shimberg Center* shows that persons below 30 percent of median income have the highest housing cost burden, with 60 percent of these households, paying more than 50 percent of their income on housing. Household at or above 60 percent of median income pay less than 30 percent of their income on housing, which is within the affordable range.

“Until the housing crisis is over and every Floridian has access to decent and affordable housing, homelessness will continue to grow in Florida,” says Nuckles. “Now is the time to lay the foundation for affordable housing and keep ‘*The Sunshine State*’ from becoming ‘*the Homeless State*.’”

The Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County is a 501 (C) 3 organization responsible for establishing and maintaining concentrated strategic efforts to develop long-term constructive solutions that address the underlying causes of homelessness and meet the immediate needs of homeless people. Governed by coalition members, the Coalition promotes collaboration and coordination among social service providers, businesses, funding institutions, housing providers, state and federal agencies, faith-based communities and other supportive organizations and individuals to organize and deliver, without duplication, support services, emergency shelters, transitional housing and affordable housing to meet the specific needs of all homeless people. The Coalition also operates the UNITY Information Network that “virtually” links service providers in Hillsborough County. UNITY offers integrated referrals, creates a base of data to better understand homelessness to plan effective intervention, and shows “real-time” availability of services – all essential to securing funding to meet the level of need within the community. For more information visit [www.homelessofhc.org](http://www.homelessofhc.org).

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