



Lee County Homeless Coalition

To advocate, educate, and promote awareness of issues and obstacles facing homeless individuals in Lee County through community collaboration, planning, and implementing solutions.

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December 16, 2014

The Honorable Matt Caldwell
Chair of the Lee County Legislative Delegation
15191 Homestead Road, Building A
Lehigh Acres, FL 33971

Dear Representative Matt Caldwell,

The Lee County Homeless Coalition is requesting placement on the Lee County Legislative Delegation Meeting agenda. The Lee County Homeless Coalition is a not for profit organization. We are an advocacy group made up of community and faith-based service providers, local businesses, people who are currently experiencing or who have experienced homelessness, and other advocates committed to ending homelessness. We are one of 28 coalitions in the state of Florida. Working together we have established three priorities. The document outlining our priorities is attached.

We greatly appreciate the leadership and understanding you have demonstrated in the areas of mental health and substance abuse treatment. We would ask that you continue to support funding for mental health and substance abuse services as these issues directly relate to a persons ability to maintain their housing.

Thank you for the work you are doing and your support of our community.

Sincerely,

Janet Bartos
Executive Director
Lee County Homeless Coalition

Compassion... Commitment... Community

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2015 Consensus Legislative Priorities

The Florida Coalition for the Homeless (FCH) is a dynamic organization whose membership includes the state's 28 Local Lead Agency Continuums of Care (CoCs), homeless advocates, local service providers, members of the faith-based community, formerly homeless persons, educators, attorneys, mental health professionals and policy makers statewide who are committed to implementing programs that prevent homelessness and rapidly re-house individuals and families so that they may return to self-sufficiency and productive lives.

Working together, the Florida Coalition for the Homeless has established the following 2015 Legislative Priorities to work toward ending homelessness in Florida and increase support for local CoCs that manage these important programs.

1. Continue the FY 2014-15 \$4 million non-recurring funding for the Challenge Grant Programs as recurring

The 2014 Legislature appropriated \$4 million in non-recurring funding for Challenge Grants. FCH is advocating for the reappropriation of these funds as recurring for FY 2015-16. Chapter 420.644(4), Florida Statutes establishes the Challenge Grant Program and establishes criteria for local grant awards, competitively procured by the State Office on Homelessness. Challenge Grant funding is used by the Continuums of Care to meet emergency needs of the homeless and at risk individuals and families. Challenge Grants provide for innovative, local solutions to bridge the gap for CoCs to build flexible, coordinated systems that improve efficiency, reduce duplication, and prevent and end homelessness. Further, Challenge Grant funding helps to ensure there is funding for emergency shelter, meals, clothing, and other critical local needs are addressed to serve the most vulnerable population in each Continuum of Care while more permanent housing options/programs funded by HUD are explored.

2. Continue the FY 2014-15 \$1 million non-recurring increase in base operational funding for the State's 28 Local Coalitions as recurring

During the 2014 Legislative Session, the Legislature appropriated an additional \$1 million for the CoC Staffing Grant, however; this appropriation was non-recurring and the grant will not be available in 2015 unless the Legislature reappropriates the funds. FCH is advocating for the \$1 million non-recurring funds to become recurring for 2015-16 FY. This funding supports local coalition operations and staffing. Local Continuums of Care compete for U.S. HUD federal funding to underwrite service and housing resources across the state, based on local community needs. CoCs strongly support and have access to a variety of Federal and State funding to assist the homeless with housing needs that Continuums of Care administer. These programs include: Emergency Solutions Grants, Community Development Block Grants, State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) funds, Supportive Services for Veterans Families and HUD Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Programs. The Continuums of Care are responsible for generating more than \$300 million in Federal funding assistance to help end homeless in Florida since 2008.

3. Support Legislation relating to Public Records Exemption for Homeless Persons

Support legislation that creates a public records exemption for information contained within a Point-In-Time Count or in a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) that could directly or indirectly identify a specific person, be manipulated to identify a specific person, or be linked with other available information to identify a specific person.