**2017 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. This diverse group is committed to implementing programs that prevent homelessness and rapidly re-house homeless individuals and families to return them to self-sufficiency and productive lives. The membership of the Florida Coalition for the Homeless has collaborated to establish the following 2017 Legislative Priorities to work toward ending homelessness in Florida and to increase the capacity of local CoCs to manage and deliver these important programs.

1. **Increase the base operational funding by $300,000 recurring for the State’s 28 Local Homeless Continuum of Care Lead Agencies. (Included in DCF’s Legislative Budget Request)**

In 2016, the Legislature provided $2.7 million recurring and $300,000 non-recurring to support and help the Twenty-Eight regionally located CoC Lead Agencies meet their capacity needs through the local CoCs Staffing Grant. The Coalition has included this issue as a top priority for 2017 to secure the $300,000 non-recurring received in last year’s budget as recurring during the 2017 budget cycle. The amount is to be divided equally among the CoCs.

The CoCs are under contract with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) State Office on Homelessness. All Staffing Grant funds are an investment by the State of Florida to maintain the health and viability of the CoCs which garner the Federal funds to provide food, transportation, shelter, rapid-rehousing rent/utility assistance, and operational costs for complex programs that serve the escalating number of homeless families or individuals with disabilities, mental health/substance abuse disorders and other barriers to self-sufficiency. Because of expanding workload and capacity issues, the CoCs are seeking $300,000 in Recurring funding to address what has become a recurring workload.

1. **Continue Homeless Recurring Staffing and Challenge Grants**

The Legislature appropriated $2.7 million and $5 million recurring revenue for homeless Staffing and Challenge Grant funding respectively during the 2016 Legislative Session. The Coalition has included the continuation of these vital state funds as a top priority for the 2017 Legislative Session.

The Challenge Grant funds are for use by the homeless designated lead agencies in each local homeless assistance Continuum of Care for the benefit of the designated catchment area. 420.644(4), Florida Statutes establishes the Challenge Grant Program and establishes criteria for local grant awards, competitively procured through 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, especially those needs which cannot be met by any other program.

1. **Affordable Housing Trust Fund**

FCH is advocating for the legislature to use all of the Affordable Housing Trust fund monies for housing programs. The State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) and the State Apartment Incentive Loan Program (SAIL) are highly leveraged, with private sector loans and equity providing $4 to $6 for every one dollar of state funding—thus greatly increasing economic impact. Based on the latest revenue estimate, there is $283.26 million available for distribution to the state and local housing trust funds for Fiscal Year 2017-18. (SHIP: $198.5 million / SAIL: $84.76 million) If ALL of the money is used for housing, it will create 26,400 jobs; and an economic impact of $3.3 billion to the State of Florida.