



Message from the CEO

BY: JAIMIE ROSS

The amount of rental assistance needed everywhere in the nation is staggering. As soon as the declaration of disaster was declared, Florida's SHIP programs (State Housing Initiatives Partnership) began reprogramming local housing trust fund dollars to provide emergency rental assistance and mortgage foreclosure prevention funding due to COVID-19 related job loss. This helps the families who are renting and the landlords who they are renting from. Most landlords have mortgages to pay and without rent coming in they are in danger of foreclosure.

Typically, SHIP funds are not used for rental assistance, but because SHIP is flexible it was able to be reprogrammed from a focus on homeownership and construction into an emergency rental assistance program. It is reasonable to assume that demand for housing that is affordable will substantially increase due to loss of businesses concomitant with the coronavirus protocols.

The Sadowski Act's SHIP program, supported by 32 statewide organizations, from the Florida Realtors, the Florida Chamber of Commerce, Associated Industries of Florida to Florida AARP, Florida United Way, Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops, Florida Impact, the Florida Association of Counties and the Florida League of Cities, has again proven to be the best designed and implemented local housing program in the nation. It was a bitter pill indeed to learn on June 29th that after finally garnering support for full appropriation from the Governor, House, and Senate, the SHIP funds were vetoed.

But SHIP funding has not been swept. It remains in the local government trust fund. We need to work with the Governor and the Legislature in the November special session to see that SHIP funding is appropriated for SHIP. There is a huge amount of CARES Act funding going to local governments now that has to be deployed immediately. It will be gone by the end of December. CARES Act funding cannot be used the same way SHIP is used. For example, we will not be able to address any housing issues that are not COVID related with the federal funds. We will lose the new construction, homeownership opportunities, disaster mitigation, and the

jobs that are created with all these activities; the staples of SHIP.

To be fair, the Governor has put more money into housing than we had before. He did not have to direct any of the CARES Act funding for housing and he did. I would not take this veto of SHIP as a sign that the Governor does not still support SHIP. I believe he absolutely does support SHIP, but is keeping some options open while he addresses the budget shortfall caused by coronavirus crisis.

It will be the job of Sadowski Coalition and Sadowski Affiliates (that means everyone) to make the case between now and November that SHIP funds should be deployed for SHIP. Florida needs those funds to make repair and resiliency improvements and assist in the economic recovery by producing and preserving housing that is affordable.

For the first time in over 30 years of hosting Florida's statewide annual conference, we will be gathering this year on-line for training and networking provided in a digital format. When we realized we could not bring over 900 people together in person, we could not imagine the conference taking place. But we now know that we can and will deliver a conference that is every bit as robust, and in some ways, will provide even greater networking opportunities. Inside this Journal we will explain just how the conference will work in 2020 to meet or exceed what you have come to expect from the Florida Housing Coalition's Statewide Home Matters Annual Conference.

We are all going to be safer at home and the Florida Housing Coalition wants everyone to have a home that is safe. Housing is healthcare and housing equals jobs. We celebrate all our members who worked so diligently to secure full appropriation of Sadowski trust funds and to respond to COVID-19. Our nonprofit service and housing providers, for-profit affordable housing developers, lenders, funders, and advocates for good public policy comprise a powerful membership for the Florida Housing Coalition to end homelessness and provide housing that is affordable for all Floridians. **HNN**