

Dear Senator Kathleen Passidomo, R-Naples, Representative Sean Shaw, D-Tampa, Jaimie Ross,

The Venice City Council supports your efforts in supporting the Sadowski Act and would like to see you reintroduce Senate Bill 874 and the House companion Bill 191 that exempted the State Housing Trust Fund and the Local Government Housing Trust Fund from a provision authorizing the Legislature, in the General Appropriations Act, to transfer unappropriated cash balances from specified trust funds to the Budget Stabilization Fund and General Revenue Fund.

Along with the Florida Realtors and the Sadowski Coalition, we recognize that the trust funds created by the legislature in the 1992 Sadowski Act were created to leverage private and federal funding for affordable and workforce housing. In the early 2000's, legislators began diverting millions from the fund for other purposes. A 2018 Senate Community Affairs Committee analysis determined that since 2001, legislators have diverted more than \$2 billion into the state's general revenue account to plug budget holes and provide tax relief. This bill, if reintroduced and passed, would ban future legislatures from misappropriating housing funds to other needs.

The National Low Income Housing Coalition recently released its 2018 "State of Workforce Housing" report. This report is based on a Housing Wage which is the hourly wage a full-time worker must earn to afford a rental home. The national two-bedroom apartment wage is \$22.10 an hour which requires an annual income of a minimum of \$46,960 to afford an average fair-market rent of \$1,449 per month.

Florida is ranked 16th highest for the required Housing Wage. It has 7.4 million households, of which 35% are renters. The estimated renter median household income in Florida is \$36,166.

At the State's minimum wage of \$8.25 per hour, a fulltime worker would need to work 84 hours to afford a one bedroom rental home. The annual income calculated for a two-bedroom rental in Florida is \$44,716. It takes 104 full-time work hours to afford that two-bedroom rental.

According, to the Sadowski Coalition, it was estimated that \$314.08 million dollars was available for appropriation in the Sadowski Housing Trust Funds in the FY 2018-2019. If this money was used for Florida's affordable housing programs, it would have created over 30,000 Florida jobs and more than \$4 billion in positive economic impact in Florida.

It is time that the legislators stop raiding the housing funds. The William E. Sadowski Act was enacted to create a dedicated source of revenue for housing from a portion of

documentary stamp taxes on the transfer of real estate. The raiding of this fund continues on even though Florida suffers from an extreme shortage of affordable housing. More than 911,000 very low income Floridians pay more than 50% of their income on housing. They are one missed paycheck away from homelessness. Florida has the third largest homeless population in the nation.

We agree with Jeff Hayward, president and CEO, Heart of Florida United Way, in his support for your bill. We too recognize that as more jobs move to our state the new employees will need a place to live. Amazon's recent search for another headquarters should have taught us that employers are looking for attributes like ease of transportation, quality of life and affordable housing for their employees. If housing is unaffordable, people will not take jobs here. If people do not take jobs here, employers will move the jobs to places where it is more affordable, states Jeff Hayward.

Instead of passing your bill in 2018, the Legislature swept \$182 million from the estimated \$314 million that was designated for affordable housing. However, Florida's need for affordable housing remains and we encourage you to reintroduce your bills this year. We join you and the Sadowski Coalition, which is comprised of more than 30 diverse statewide organizations representing millions of Floridians, in urging the legislature to use all of the housing trust funds for Florida's housing programs.

Sincerely,

The Venice City Council

Dear Governor DeSantis;

Congratulations on your win!

On the campaign trail you promised to take care of all Floridians, including the people who work in hotels and restaurants, fix our homes, cut our grass, sell theme park tickets, drive buses, and take care of our elderly. These are the families who power our economy. However, many of these families are struggling with putting a roof over their heads. They are one paycheck away from not having enough money to pay their rent or their mortgage. According to the Florida Housing Coalition, one in every four Florida households, approximately 2 million households, are housing cost-burdened. They are paying more than 30% of their family's income toward housing. And 15% of Florida's households, 900,000, are severely cost-burdened. They are paying at least half of their income toward housing.

Making things worse is the shrinking inventory of rental units made affordable through government support. The Housing Coalition reported that the state lost 59,000 subsidized housing units, mainly apartments, between 1993 and 2016. The cost of rent continues to rise along with the price of real-estate.

Florida has a fund to help these people, the William E. Sadowski Affordable Housing Trust Fund. It was established 25 years ago to promote affordable housing in Florida. However, it has been used to shore up the budget instead of providing affordable housing. Since 1992, state lawmakers have robbed the fund of \$2.2 billion dollars. In 2018, \$182 million from the estimated \$314 million was used for other purposes. Local governments have been trying to make up the differences with tax payers monies. We have just pledged \$550.000 of our city tax payer's monies to help pay for an affordable housing unit.

But, we should not have to do this! The Sadowski Affordable Housing Trust Funds is funded from a small surcharge on real-estate deals. Since its inception it has added up to \$6.2 billion. This money is suppose to go toward building affordable housing, rehabbing old homes, providing rent assistance and helping first-time homebuyers make down payments.

Governor DeSantis, you are now in a position to do something about this problem. You can stop using the Sandowski Funds for anything other than its original purpose. Senators and representatives from both parties claim that they support affordable housing for Florida's work force. Now is an ideal time to put these beliefs into practice.

Sincerely,

The Venice City Council