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Point of View: Sadowski dollars for affordable housing re-allocated to general revenue

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It is time to spend Housing Trust Fund dollars on housing...

Most people are shocked when I tell them that the Florida Legislature routinely sweeps funds from the Affordable Housing Trust Funds into general revenue. They ask how can they take funds collected for affordable housing and not use them for that purpose.

After many years, I am still shocked this can happen but unfortunately not surprised. Since the legislature began this practice, over \$2 billion in funds have been swept into general revenue. I wonder if teachers, emergency responders and others would experience a severe housing crisis if the funds were used as intended.

Florida's affordable housing trust is funded by the Sadowski Affordable Housing Act of 1992. The law established documentary stamp tax revenues as a funding source for Florida's affordable housing programs. Last year, the funds were dutifully collected on real estate transactions and sent to Tallahassee. Our portion of those funds should have been \$15.4 million but we received less than \$1.9 million.

This year, if the legislature uses the housing trust fund monies solely for housing, Palm Beach County will receive approximately \$17.2 million in funding for affordable housing. The governor and Senate are recommending all the trust funds be used for housing but under the House budget, Palm Beach County will receive zero dollars.

This House budget does send \$123 million to the Florida Panhandle to help hurricane recovery efforts but sweeps the remaining \$200 million into general revenues. Hurricane recovery needs state resources, but the money should not be taken from affordable housing.

It is time for the House of representatives to recognize this crisis and use the Housing Trust Funds for housing. And the governor and Senate need to hold the line on their budget proposals. The \$17.2 million Palm Beach County could receive from the trust funds would go a long way in helping us ensure that people who work in our community are able to afford to live in our community.

SUZANNE P. CABRERA, WEST PALM BEACH

Editor's note: Cabrera is president and CEO of the Housing Leadership Council of Palm Beach County, Inc.

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