



# No Sweeps For Florida Affordable Housing Funds Could Help Rebuild Communities

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For the first time in more than a decade, the Florida Legislature will not take money away from an affordable housing trust fund. This comes as the state faces what some call an affordable housing crisis.

Money from a state affordable housing trust fund can help people buy houses, pay for repairs, and more. It can also assist developers in building affordable apartments.

"We have families who are homeless throughout the state for no other reason than they can't afford the housing in the community," says Jaimie Ross, President and CEO of the Florida Housing Coalition. She says sweeping money out of affordable housing coffers worsened a statewide crisis. Ross points to high rent and housing prices as reasons why people like firefighters, police officers, and teachers can't afford to live in the communities where they work.

"The affordable housing crisis goes from folks who are homeless to folks who are part of a professional workforce," Ross says. "(They) aren't paid enough to be able to purchase a property or rent the property that's in their community."

Now, lawmakers have agreed to earmark about \$370 million to help these communities. "It will have a great impact on helping us get those individuals who lost their homes or their apartments in the hurricane back into permanent housing," says Bay County Manager Robert Majka.

When Hurricane Michael hit his community, a lot of housing was destroyed or damaged. Majka says at first, about 900 FEMA trailers housed residents. Now, he says the number has dropped to under 500. Majka's hoping these funds will help transition even more storm survivors back into permanent housing.

"A lot of folks have jobs in [the] service industry that supports tourism," Majka says. "Having those people be able to have affordable housing goes a long way."

North Florida is not the only community excited to receive more funds. Suzanne Cabrera is President and CEO of the Housing Leadership Council of Palm Beach County. In her county, some people are spending more than half of their income on housing.

"They don't have money for other necessities. They're having to go to a food bank to get food. They're having to look for assistance paying the electric bill," Cabrera says.



She says this year, Palm Beach is expected to get more than \$17 million in affordable housing funds. That's a steep increase from the less than \$2 million the county got last year.

"We're having trouble recruiting and retaining teachers and people that work in the community because our housing costs are so expensive," Cabrera says. "So this will really help start to make a difference for...people basically all across the board."

"It is a wonderful move in the right direction," says Ross with the Florida Housing Coalition. "But we need the Sadowski trust fund money to be fully appropriated for Florida's housing programs each and every year."

Ross says the housing need in Florida will continue to grow as more people move to the state. She notes more than \$2 billion has been taken out of Florida's affordable housing fund since it began.

Article last accessed on December 12, 2019 [here](#).