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December 30, 2025

Mr. Dana Souza, City Manager, and Members of the Sanibel City Council  
City of Sanibel  
800 Dunlop Road  
Sanibel, FL 33957

Dear Mr. Souza and Members of the City Council,

Community Housing and Resources (CHR) respectfully requests support for the proposed \$15 million Community Development Block Grant Disaster Relief (CDBG-DR) allocation dedicated to affordable workforce housing as a cornerstone of Sanibel's long-term recovery and resilience strategy.

For more than 45 years, CHR has provided affordable housing on Sanibel and Captiva for very low-, low-, and moderate-income households, with residents earning an average annual income of approximately \$38,800. In the most recent fiscal year, CHR housed more than 100 residents, including families with children and seniors, while receiving over 100 housing inquiries and maintaining an active waitlist. These figures highlight the persistent and growing gap between workforce housing supply and demand.

To address this gap, CHR is pursuing the proposed acquisition of the Fish House property, creating the opportunity to develop 38 new affordable apartment homes through a multi-use workforce housing project. This development would include residential housing alongside compatible community-serving uses, strengthening both housing availability and neighborhood vitality. If realized, this project would make it possible, for the first time in over 45 years, for Sanibel to meet its 3% affordable housing goal as outlined in the Sanibel Plan, representing a transformational milestone in the island's housing strategy.

This request aligns with the Lee County Department of Economic Development's supported "triangle communities" model, which emphasizes the ability for people to live, work, and shop within the same geographic area. Workforce housing located near employment centers reduces congestion on bridges and evacuation routes, lowers transportation costs, supports environmental sustainability, stabilizes local businesses, and strengthens emergency preparedness through improved workforce retention. Without advancing its own triangle community model, Sanibel risks losing remaining workforce residents to emerging communities elsewhere in Lee County, including Lehigh Acres and Cape Coral, where housing availability and employment opportunities are increasingly co-located. The absence of comparable options on Sanibel may result in permanent workforce relocation, further constraining economic recovery and long-term vitality.

The proposed \$15 million CDBG allocation presents an opportunity to respond proactively to this regional reality. Strategic investment in affordable workforce housing, including the Fish House project, will help Sanibel remain competitive for essential workers, support local businesses, and function as a complete, resilient community rather than a commuter-dependent destination.

CHR appreciates the City Council's thoughtful stewardship of federal recovery funds and respectfully requests support for this allocation in service of Sanibel's economic sustainability, workforce stability, and long-term resilience.

Sincerely,

Nicole McHale

Executive Director