

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-0926**

August 20, 2019

The Honorable Alex M. Azar  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue S.W.  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

We write to you regarding an application for Title V federal surplus property use by the Miami-Dade County's Homeless Trust, the Lead Agency for Miami-Dade County's Homeless Continuum of Care. We are seeking clarity regarding the Trust's application, and information regarding the Trust's application.

Per their mission statement, Verde Gardens is engaging, training, and employing homeless and formerly homeless households, consistent with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's policy priority of increasing employment for homeless and formerly homeless persons. According to the organization, this employment not only generates income to afford housing, it improves recovery outcomes for persons with mental illness and addiction.

It is our understanding that two years ago, the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust reached out to HHS to evolve the programming at Verde Gardens to enhance the viability of the organic farm, kitchen, and farmer's market. The organization has informed us that the farm and market have struggled to sustain operations despite considerable local investment. They have partnered with the non-profit organization Redland Ahead, which has experience in serving underserved populations and has sought to increase and diversify the activities at the farm and market in support of the formerly homeless households at Verde, as well as homeless and formerly homeless households throughout Miami-Dade's continuum. We have been informed that HHS communicated to Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust and Redland Ahead that any for-profit microenterprises are not allowed on Title V federal surplus property, even if they have committed to employing and training homeless populations. If this is the case, can you please cite the regulation or statute prohibiting this activity?

We support the Homeless Trust's efforts to work in a partnership with HHS to evolve the programming at Verde Gardens and respectfully ask that HHS engage in a fair and open dialogue with the Homeless Trust and Redland Ahead. Furthermore, we request that HHS give full and fair consideration to requests by the Homeless Trust to extend any compliance deadlines until such discussions with the Homeless Trust and Redland Ahead occur.

Sincerely,



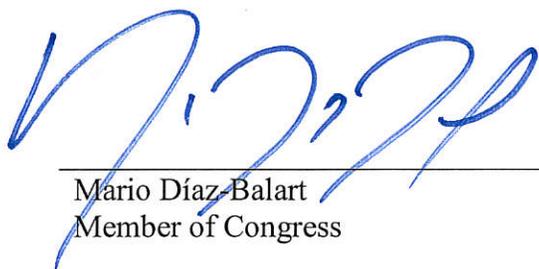
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Debbie Mucarsel-Powell  
Member of Congress



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Donna Shalala  
Member of Congress



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Mario Díaz-Balart  
Member of Congress



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Debbie Wasserman-Schultz  
Member of Congress