

Ms. Mary Blanco, Board Member

**SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION NO. 24-021 OF THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, RECOGNIZING CASA FAMILIA, INC.**

**COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN: INFORMED, ENGAGED, & EMPOWERED STAKEHOLDERS**

Casa Familia Inc. is a South Florida-based nonprofit organization founded in 2015 by a group of families of loved ones living with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Mobilized by the shared fear of an uncertain future in which they would no longer be able to care for their loved ones with special needs, the Jawitz and Whitehurst families came together with the dream of building a supportive community where their relatives could lead meaningful, productive, and fulfilling lives. The main goal of the organization is to sponsor the development of affordable housing communities to serve adults living with IDD in Miami-Dade County, a great need that the founding families had experienced personally with their relatives.

In the entire state of Florida, there are only five (5) affordable housing communities dedicated to individuals with IDD and none of them are in the South Florida area. That was about to change in 2019 when Casa Familia was awarded much-needed resources to begin the first stages of the development of The Village of Casa Familia, the first affordable housing community for people with IDD in Miami-Dade County. Located in the Kendall area, near public transportation, employment opportunities, shopping centers, and recreational and medical facilities, The Village of Casa Familia will offer its residents affordable housing, vocational and continuing education opportunities, and extracurricular and recreational activities in a campus-style setting. The vision behind The Village of Casa Familia is to provide adults with IDD adequate resources to maximize their independence and nurture their social connectedness in a supportive environment that meets their needs.

On December 19, 2023, for many families in our community, fear for the future turned into hope for tomorrow with the groundbreaking ceremony of The Village of Casa Familia. The construction of The Village of Casa Familia is a dream come true and the result of more than eight years of arduous work and advocacy from the entire Casa Familia team, its Founding Board Members, including Karin Jawitz, Marie-Ilene Whitehurst, Lourdes Sanchez, Debbie Lawrence, Maria Perez, Vinita Tandon; Casa Familia's Executive Board, including Anay Abraham, Executive Director; Natasha Lowell, Chair; Michael Moran, President; Nick Inamdar, Vice Chair; Tom Whitehurst, Vice President; Erbi Blanco-True, Treasurer; Michael Alessandri, Secretary; Casa Familia's diverse community of leaders from the public and private sectors, families, friends, and community leaders and partners.

This resolution recognizes the exceptional work that Casa Familia, Inc. has done and continues to do in support of people living with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families and friends, and the entire Miami-Dade County community. We join Casa Familia in celebrating the commencement of the construction of The Village of Casa Familia.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY**

**MS. MARY BLANCO:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve Resolution No. 24-021 of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, recognizing Casa Familia, Inc.

**RESOLUTION NO. 24-021 OF THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA,  
RECOGNIZING CASA FAMILIA, INC.**

**WHEREAS**, Casa Familia Inc. is a South Florida-based nonprofit organization founded in 2015 by a group of families of loved ones living with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Mobilized by the shared fear of an uncertain future in which they would no longer be able to care for their loved ones with special needs, the Jawitz and Whitehurst families came together with the dream of building a supportive community where their relatives could lead meaningful, productive, and fulfilling lives. The main goal of the organization is to sponsor the development of affordable housing communities to serve adults living with IDD in Miami-Dade County, a great need that the founding families had experienced personally with their relatives; and

**WHEREAS**, in the entire state of Florida, there are only five (5) affordable housing communities dedicated to individuals with IDD and none of them are in the South Florida area. That was about to change in 2019 when Casa Familia was awarded much-needed resources to begin the first stages of the development of The Village of Casa Familia, the first affordable housing community for people with IDD in Miami-Dade County. Located in the Kendall area, near public transportation, employment opportunities, shopping centers, and recreational and medical facilities, The Village of Casa Familia will offer its residents affordable housing, vocational and continuing education opportunities, and extracurricular and recreational activities in a campus-style setting. The vision behind The Village of Casa Familia is to provide adults with IDD adequate resources to maximize their independence and nurture their social connectedness in a supportive environment that meets their needs; and

**WHEREAS**, on December 19, 2023, for many families in our community, fear for the future turned into hope for tomorrow with the groundbreaking ceremony of The Village of Casa Familia. The construction of The Village of Casa Familia is a dream come true and the result of more than eight years of arduous work and advocacy from the entire Casa Familia team, its Founding Board Members, including Karin Jawitz, Marie-Ilene Whitehurst, Lourdes Sanchez, Debbie Lawrence, Maria Perez, Vinita Tandon; Casa Familia's Executive Board, including Anay Abraham, Executive Director; Natasha Lowell, Chair; Michael Moran, President; Nick Inamdar, Vice Chair; Tom Whitehurst, Vice President; Erbi Blanco-True, Treasurer; Michael Alessandri, Secretary; Casa Familia's diverse community of leaders from the public and private sectors, families, friends, and community leaders and partners; and

**WHEREAS**, this resolution recognizes the exceptional work that Casa Familia, Inc. has done and continues to do in support of people living with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families and friends, and the entire Miami-Dade County community. We join Casa Familia in celebrating the commencement of the construction of The Village of Casa Familia;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:**

The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve Resolution No. 24-021 of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, recognizing Casa Familia, Inc.

A copy of this resolution is placed in the permanent records of this Board.

**Presented this seventeenth day of April, A.D. 2024**

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

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SCHOOL BOARD CHAIR

ATTEST:

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Secretary