



Florida Action Committee, Inc.
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January 22, 2018

Board of County Commissioners
Miami-Dade County
Attn: Daysha McBride
Stephen P. Clark Government Center
111 NW 1st Street, 2nd Floor Commission Chambers
Miami, Florida 33128

SENT VIA EMAIL
dmcbriid@miamidade.gov

**RE: STATEMENT IN OPPOSITION OF THE PROPOSED
AMENDMENT TO SECTION 21-286 OF THE COUNTY CODE**

Dear Ms. McBride:

I respectfully request this letter be submitted to the members of the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners in anticipation of tomorrow's regular meeting, and be made part of the public record.

We write in strong opposition of the proposed Amendment to Section 21-286 of the County Code. We have previously written twice concerning this issue. Copies of our prior correspondence are attached to this email for your reference and for the record.

As you are aware, the Florida Action Committee, Inc. (FAC) is a not-for-profit public safety advocacy organization. Our concern is both for the individuals who were legislated into homelessness and forced to live transient, as well as the community in those areas in which they are clustered. Our membership is comprised of your constituents and citizens of Florida in other Counties, who have an interest in the above-referenced matter.

The Amendment you will be voting on is not about doing what is right for the citizens of this County or in the best interest of public safety. It is about the continued unfair influence, lobbyist Ron Book leverages against politicians in this County and in the Florida legislature, as well as the blatant conflict of interest that exists within the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust.

FAC members were appalled watching the webcast of the Public Safety and Health Committee meeting last month, during which this Amendment moved forward. It was not lost that Ron Book had contributed thousands of dollars to the commissioners involved. Sponsor Esteban Bovo has taken in over \$2,500 from Ron Book's Lobbying Firm plus \$1,000 from each of Ron Book and Patricia Book, individually.¹ Co-Sponsor Jose "Pepe" Diaz, who gushed praises of Ron Book received \$2,500 from Pat Book, \$3,000 from Ron and \$5,000 from Book's lobbying firm.² Even chairperson Sally Heyman, who seemed to "get it" but reluctantly voted in favor of the amendment, received significant campaign contributions from the Books.³

Our objective is not to point fingers, but to point out the obvious to members of the public who will read this. Campaign contributions are clouding common sense. The Homeless Trust Chair has a clear conflict of interest in this matter; the underlying ordinance *causing* the homelessness is named after his daughter!

Homeless advocates have opposed this Amendment. Homeless advocacy across the country argue against criminalization. Even the Police do not support this amendment. So why is our Homeless Trust pushing for criminalization of these homeless?

It would be fine if Ron Book chose to advocate for this position as an individual, or as an officer of Lauren's Kids, but he certainly shouldn't be taking a position adverse to the homeless as the Chair of the Homeless Trust and in his official capacity. He is abusing his position with the County by imposing his personal vendetta against this group.

All this Amendment will do is punish those registrants who are abiding by the law! They are in one of the only spots in the County they can lawfully sleep. Most were sent to that location by probation, Many are on GPS cannot leave or they will be violated.

If you want to do something about public safety, be responsible with public funds and create safer communities, repeal or amend the Lauren Book Child Safety Ordinance so that these homeless individuals can find a *reasonable* place to live.

Do not allow a man who has such a strong personal bias against this class of individuals to continue to steer this ship. This Amendment will not undo the horrors Lauren endured for so long and no Sex Offender Residency Restrictions would have prevented them. Only through sound policy do we have the power to raise awareness and end the cycle of abuse.

¹ <https://www.followthemoney.org/entity-details?eid=6677197>

² <https://www.followthemoney.org/entity-details?eid=506055>

³ <https://www.followthemoney.org/entity-details?eid=6415991>

Miami-Dade has a serious problem that this Amendment will not solve. Roughly one-third of sex offenders in the County on probation are homeless and more than one-quarter of those not on probation are also homeless. Currently, that's over four hundred people! With lifetime registration, no attrition, more registrants being released daily and the supply of available compliant housing diminishing, that problem will grow exponentially. Housing them in Jail will not solve the problem. It will create more problems.

We implore you to defer or reject the proposed amendment to 21-286 and afford an *impartial, unbiased* individual to take a stab at finding a better solution to this problem, before you impose this horribly punitive sanction on people who are merely trying to exist in compliance with the law.

Sincerely,

s/
Gail Colletta, President
The Florida Action Committee, Inc.