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July 21, 2021

All Lawmakers Representing Broward County  
Broward County Legislative Delegation  
115 S. Andrews Ave., Room 429  
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301

**RE: THE HOMELESS SEX OFFENDER  
PROBLEM IN BROWARD COUNTY**

Dear Lawmakers:

I am President of the Florida Action Committee (FAC), a 2000+ member non-profit organization that advocates for public safety and laws based on empirical research. Our focus is on the Florida Sex Offender Registry.

There are currently more than three hundred (300) persons required to register living homeless in Broward County. That number represents 25.52% of all persons required to register in the County. These people are legislated into homelessness by laws excluding them from living within a radius of certain landmarks. These Sex Offender Residency Restrictions (SORRs) include the County's SORR Ordinance (Sec. 21-167A) and a patchwork of City Ordinances that further restrict housing.

Presently, 80.6% of these people live in the City of Ft. Lauderdale, within the general vicinity of 2700-2900 North Federal Highway.<sup>1</sup> They sleep outdoors in this small pocket of availability because it is one of the few remaining locations where somebody on the registry could lawfully "live" in Broward County.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://offender.fdle.state.fl.us/offender/publicDataFile.jsf>

In May, Monarch Montessori Academy began operating at 2624 Middle River Dr in Fort Lauderdale. The Ft. Lauderdale SORR (Sec. 16-127), precludes persons required to register from residing within 1,400 feet of a school, day care, park or playground. Under Florida Statutes, even a transient location is considered a “residence”.

Accordingly, persons required to register will now be precluded from “residing” in one of the last remaining viable pockets of availability in the County. For the reasons outlined herein, this presents an impending public safety crisis in Broward and is a matter that requires the immediate attention of lawmakers at the City, County and State levels.

Later this year, the Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government (OPPAGA) will issue its triannual report on sex offender management. Their last report found that there was a 53 percent increase in the number of persons required to register in Florida<sup>2</sup> during the preceding fifteen years.<sup>3</sup> That pace has not slowed. As more individuals are added to the registry and the already limited availability of compliant housing is diminished, research suggests that Broward’s safety will be compromised, rather than protected.

SORRs drastically reduce the availability of compliant housing options.<sup>4</sup> As the number of registrants grows<sup>5</sup>, and the availability of already limited housing is consumed or eliminated, the number of transient (homeless) registrants will increase.

With the recent opening of a childcare center closing off the largest pocket of compliant land for registrants in Broward to go, they will have no options other than to go underground, and currently no homeless shelter in Broward County accepts persons required to register.

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<sup>2</sup> Broward County has tripled during the same period.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/MonitorDocs/Reports/pdf/1808rpt.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Socia, Kelly M., et al. ““Brothers Under the Bridge” Factors Influencing the Transience of Registered Sex Offenders in Florida.” *Sexual Abuse* 27.6 (2015): 559-586.

<sup>5</sup> The State of Florida mandates *all* persons required to register do so for their entire lifetime.

While we appreciate the popularity of these SORRs, as lawmakers your primary concern should be public safety. Research suggests there is no evidence that SORRs reduce sexual offending or recidivism.<sup>6</sup> This fact has been demonstrated across numerous studies, including the U.S. Department of Justice, which concluded that SORRs should not be viewed as a viable strategy for protecting communities.<sup>7</sup>

On the contrary, SORRs create barriers to reentry by fostering housing instability, separation from family and support systems, and isolation, all of which are factors that *increase* recidivism. Transient registrants are more likely than those with homes to abscond from registration.<sup>8</sup> For registration to be effective, law enforcement needs to know where registrants are located. SORRs frustrate that purpose and make probation and supervision more difficult. An international, interdisciplinary non-profit organization for the advancement of professional standards and practices in the field of sex offender evaluation and treatment suggests that SORRs may cause *higher* levels of recidivism.<sup>9</sup> SORRs also create a fiscal burden for taxpayers associated with mapping, monitoring, enforcement, court costs, and incarceration costs.

While we appreciate this topic can be incendiary, it is one that can no longer go unaddressed. Accordingly, we urge lawmakers to consider the foregoing and immediately convene a committee to address this critical public safety issue.

Respectfully Submitted,  
*/s/ Gail Colletta*  
Gail Colletta, President

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<sup>6</sup> Nobles, Matt R., Jill S. Levenson, and Tasha J. Youstin. "Effectiveness of residence restrictions in preventing sex offense recidivism." *Crime & Delinquency* 58.4 (2012): 491-513

<sup>7</sup> [http://smart.gov/SOMAPI/sec2/ch6\\_registration.html](http://smart.gov/SOMAPI/sec2/ch6_registration.html)

<sup>8</sup> Levenson, J. S., Ackerman, A. R., Socia, K. M., & Harris, A. J. (2015). Where for Art Thou? Transient Sex Offenders and Residence Restrictions. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 26(4), 319-344.  
doi:10.1177/0887403413512326

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.atsa.com/pdfs/Policy/2014-02-18\\_ATSA\\_CCASA\\_Amicus\\_Brief.pdf](https://www.atsa.com/pdfs/Policy/2014-02-18_ATSA_CCASA_Amicus_Brief.pdf)