

# MIAMI BEACH

## COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission  
 FROM: Vice-Mayor Steven Weiner  
 DATE: March 27, 2023

SUBJECT: REFERRAL TO THE PUBLIC SAFETY AND NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY OF LIFE COMMITTEE TO EXPLORE THE FEASIBILITY OF THE CITY ESTABLISHING A CRIME LABORATORY TO TEST SUSPECTED CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES IMPOUNDED BY THE POLICE DEPARTMENT.

### ANALYSIS

Please place on the March 27, 2023 agenda a referral to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee to explore the feasibility of the City establishing a crime laboratory in order to test suspected controlled substances that are impounded from criminal offenders by the Miami Beach Police Department.

The Miami-Dade Police Department includes a Forensic Services Bureau (the "Bureau"), which is comprised of Analytical, Forensic Identification, Fingerprint Identification and Forensic Biology Sections, that provide forensic services for Miami-Dade County's estimated 2.8 million citizens and all 34 incorporated municipalities. The Bureau includes an accredited crime laboratory (the "Crime Lab") whose scientists examine evidence, conduct analyses, and issue reports with the findings, and also provide expert testimony in courts of law.

However, it is my understanding that, primarily based upon inadequate personnel staffing levels, funding and a heavy workload, the Crime Lab is struggling to timely test suspected controlled substances that have been impounded from arrestees and pursuant to search warrants. As a result, it is my further understanding that suspected cannabis (marijuana) is rarely, if ever, tested by the Crime Lab. Additionally, other "harder" controlled substances (such as cocaine, MDMA, heroin, etc.), which take precedence for the Crime Lab and its limited time and resources, aren't always tested in a timely manner. As a result, many criminal offenders arrested by the Miami Beach Police Department (and other police departments in the County) cannot be prosecuted for the sale (including trafficking cases), purchase and possession of controlled substances.

To address these issues, I am requesting that the Miami Beach Police Department explore the possibility of the City creating and establishing its own crime lab. By establishing our own crime lab, the City could ensure that all suspected controlled substances are promptly tested, and that criminal defendants arrested by the Police Department for controlled substance offenses can be appropriately prosecuted.

As part of its due diligence, I request that the Police Department (in conjunction with the Property Management Department, as necessary) explore the various issues pertaining to this potential endeavor including, but not limited to, the various costs associated with this project, the necessity and procedure for crime lab accreditation, and a location/facility in which the crime laboratory could be housed. This due diligence should include outreach to other cities who may wish to participate in the Miami Beach crime lab to offset the costs.

### SUPPORTING SURVEY DATA

N/A

### FINANCIAL INFORMATION

N/A

Is this a "Residents Right to Know" item, pursuant to City Code Section 2-14?

Yes

Does this item utilize G.O. Bond Funds?

No

### Legislative Tracking

Vice-Mayor Steven Weiner