

RESOLUTION NO. _____

A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, JOINING MIAMI-DADE COUNTY AND REQUESTING URGENT ASSISTANCE FROM THE STATE OF FLORIDA AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FOR A COORDINATED AND UNITED COMMITMENT AND FUNDING TO RESTORE AND PROTECT BISCAYNE BAY.

WHEREAS, the City of Miami Beach (the "City") is comprised of a number of islands with approximately 70 miles of shoreline along numerous canals and waterways, the Atlantic Ocean, and Biscayne Bay, all of which support a wide variety of flora and fauna; and

WHEREAS, Biscayne Bay provides Miami-Dade County residents and visitors with environmental and public health benefits, beauty, and serenity; and

WHEREAS, part of Biscayne Bay lies within Biscayne National park, and this renowned ecosystem provides numerous recreational and commercial opportunities including tourism, fishing, boating, cruising, diving, and sightseeing; and

WHEREAS, the health and cleanliness of Biscayne Bay is vital to Greater Miami's community and inextricably linked to the economic and environmental well-being of Miami-Dade County, as well as the rest of the state; and

WHEREAS, as reported in the local news, there have recently been unprecedented fish die-offs in Biscayne Bay, and it is believed that the health of Biscayne Bay may be at a critical tipping point; and

WHEREAS, water quality in Biscayne Bay is contaminated by sewage leakages, which result in harmful bacteria proliferation; the inflow of eutrophic nutrients, which result in dissolved oxygen depletion and destructive algal blooms; and pollution and littering, which result in mounds of trash being discharged into the Bay via the storm drainage systems; and

WHEREAS, seagrass, the foundation of all life in Biscayne Bay which provides habitat for ecologically and economically important fisheries such as shrimp, lobster, and various fish species, has declined significantly in several basin; and

WHEREAS, according to a report dated January 29, 2019, on the findings of a Miami-Dade County Division of Environmental Resources Management study on the decline of seagrass and hardbottom in Biscayne Bay, "catastrophic losses can occur in bodies of water with limited tidal flushing, such as the Julia Tuttle Basin in north Biscayne Bay, and nutrient loads that are both concentrated and frequent"; and

WHEREAS, similarly, a report filed on August 8, 2019 by a Grand Jury convened by the Miami-Dade County State Attorney's Office recognized that "too much nitrogen and phosphorous in the water causes algae to grow faster than the ecosystems can handle"; and

WHEREAS, in February 2019, the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners (the "Board") created the Biscayne Bay Task Force, whose purpose is to advise the Board and the County Mayor on issues related to Biscayne Bay, including the long-term management of Biscayne Bay; the health of the marine community; run-off and other impacts to water quality; marine debris; education and outreach; and economic development and vitality related to Biscayne Bay; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, the Greater Miami and the Beaches, which is a unique partnership of Miami-Dade County, the City of Miami, and the City of Miami Beach, released a resilience strategy, Resilient305, listing restoration of the Bay as a principle action; and

WHEREAS, on March 18, 2020, the City adopted Resolution 2020-31198, urging the County to adopt a model Florida-Friendly Fertilizer Ordinance, or any substitute or similar legislation which would regulate the proper use and application of fertilizers and reduce pollution of local water bodies; and

WHEREAS, the overgrowth of algae and other harmful marine vegetation hinders the flood attenuation effects of natural and constructed stormwater conveyances; accordingly, regulations on the use of nutrients, including phosphorus and nitrogen contained in fertilizers, will help improve and maintain water and habitat quality; and

WHEREAS, on August 31, 2020, the Biscayne Bay Task Force submitted a comprehensive report with recommendations to the County, urging the County to take action to maintain, restore, and protect Biscayne Bay; and

WHEREAS, despite the dire and critical state of the Biscayne Bay, recovery is possible through unified effort and collaboration between local, state, and federal agencies to chart a long-term recovery path towards a healthy and resilient Biscayne Bay; and

WHEREAS; for example, in Tampa Bay, there was a 90 percent decline in seagrass between 1948 and 1982; after a series of decisive measures, including the formation of a technical team to expressly investigate how to reduce nutrient loading, there was a marked decrease in microscopic algae clouding the water column leading to improved water clarity; and

WHEREAS, this success in meeting water quality targets led to Tampa Bay exceeding their established seagrass recovery goal of 38,000 acres, with 41,655 acres restored by 2016; and

WHEREAS, a similar effort was undertaken in Sarasota Bay that led to a 46 percent reduction in nitrogen loading and subsequent resurgence of seagrass habitat; and

WHEREAS, at its August 31, 2020 meeting, Miami-Dade County Board of Commissioners passed and adopted a series of resolutions, taking the following actions: declaring Biscayne Bay emergency and establishing a policy to prioritize and accelerate actions to address issues related to the health and well-being of Biscayne Bay; directing the County Mayor to review the report and recommendations of the Biscayne Bay Task Force and provide an implementation plan for immediate action; and urging the U.S. Congress and the Florida Legislature to provide additional funding for Biscayne Bay; and

WHEREAS, a unified, coordinated approach between local, state, and federal agencies, as well as an educational campaign outreach to the public to improve water quality will ensure the recovery and preservation of Biscayne Bay for its ecological functions, economic importance, and natural splendor.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT DULY RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, that the Mayor and City Commission hereby join Miami-Dade County and request urgent assistance from the State of Florida and the federal government for a coordinated and united commitment and funding to restore and protect Biscayne Bay.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this **16th** day of **September**, 2020.

ATTEST:

Dan Gelber, Mayor

Rafael E. Granado, City Clerk

(Sponsored by Commissioner Mark Samuelian)

APPROVED AS TO
FORM & LANGUAGE
& FOR EXECUTION

R. O. ... 9/8/20
City Attorney Date
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