

RESOLUTION NO. _____

A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, URGING THE STATE OF FLORIDA AND THE UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (“EPA”) TO EXPLORE THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY OR BARRIERS THAT CAN BE USED TO INTERCEPT THE SARGASSUM SEAWEEED THAT HARBORS DANGEROUS AMOUNTS OF FLESH-EATING “VIBRIO” BACTERIA BEFORE THE SEAWEEED REACHES MIAMI-DADE COUNTY COASTLINES, AND TO APPROPRIATE FUNDING FOR THIS EFFORT; FURTHER, DIRECTING THE CITY CLERK’S OFFICE TO SEND A COPY OF THIS RESOLUTION TO THE RELEVANT STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES, MEMBERS OF THE MIAMI-DADE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS AND U.S. SENATOR RICK SCOTT.

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 Aquatic Preserve, all of which support a wide variety of flora and fauna; and

WHEREAS, the City hosts approximately 15 million visitors each year, and is considered one of the world’s most popular tourist destinations because of its beaches, crystal-clear blue water, and tropical environment; and

WHEREAS, the City, as well as the entirety of Miami-Dade County (the “County”), are battling massive amounts of sargassum seaweed, a type of floating algae, being deposited onto its beaches; and

WHEREAS, the enormous amounts of sargassum seaweed along the Florida coastline, combined with its accompanying intoxicating odor, create an unsightly appearance and unsanitary conditions, prevent beachgoers and millions of Florida tourists from enjoying the sandy beaches and the ocean, and expose Florida residents and tourists to tremendous health risks; and

WHEREAS, a recent study from Florida Atlantic University (“FAU”) uncovered how sargassum seaweed can interact with plastic debris in the ocean and deadly Vibrio bacteria to create the perfect “pathogen storm” for beachgoers; and

WHEREAS, Vibrio bacteria is a flesh-eating bacteria present in waters around the world that can cause life-threatening illness from seafood consumption, and is the main cause of death in humans from the marine environment; and

WHEREAS, because the rare, naturally-occurring bacteria thrive in warm brackish seawater, according to the Florida Health Department, people with open wounds can easily become exposed through direct contact; and

WHEREAS, Florida saw an increase in Vibrio cases throughout 2022, driven largely by a surge in the county hit hardest by Hurricane Ian due to warm, standing water; and

WHEREAS, although little is known about the ecological relationship between Vibrio and Sargassum, researchers have discovered that Vibrio pathogens have the unique ability to “stick” to microplastics; and

WHEREAS, cultivation-based data from FAU shows that beached sargassum appears to harbor high amounts of Vibrio bacteria; and

WHEREAS, the federal, state and local municipalities must work collaboratively to combat the invasive sargassum seaweed harboring dangerous flesh-eating bacteria, in order to protect treasured Florida beaches, including beaches in Miami-Dade County, and preserve Florida's tourism and beachfront property values; and

WHEREAS, as such, the Mayor and City Commission fully support and urge the Florida Legislature to explore the use of technology or barriers that can be used to intercept the seaweed before it reaches our coastlines, and further urge the Florida Legislature to appropriate adequate funds for this state-wide public health and economic issue; and

WHEREAS, the State of Florida should explore potential technologies such as the "Ocean Cleaner," which battles excessive sargassum invasion on the coasts of the Caribbean by using customized floating barriers offshore, which is then collected by specialized boats and repurposed or recycled in an eco-friendly manner; and

WHEREAS, with the fine mesh in its barrier design, marine life is not adversely affected by the Ocean Cleaner or similar technologies, and the system can harvest more than 550 tons of sargassum weeds per 8-hour day, preventing harmful emissions of hydrogen sulfide that would have been released into the atmosphere; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and City Commission further desire to incorporate this Resolution, and any topics or actions related to the sargassum seaweed removal that are not yet part of the City's current State and Federal Agenda, as part of the City's 2024 State and Federal Priorities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT DULY RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, UPDATE that the Mayor and City Commission hereby urge the Florida Legislature and the United States Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA") to explore the use of technology or barriers that can be used to intercept the sargassum seaweed that harbors dangerous amounts of flesh-eating "vibrio" bacteria before the seaweed reaches Miami-Dade County coastlines, and to appropriate funding for this effort; further, direct the City Clerk's Office to send a copy of this Resolution to the relevant state and federal agencies, members of the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners and U.S. Senator Rick Scott.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this ____ day of _____, 2023.

ATTEST:

Dan Gelber, Mayor

Rafael E. Granado, City Clerk

(Sponsored by Commissioner Alex J. Fernandez)

APPROVED AS TO
FORM & LANGUAGE
& FOR EXECUTION



City Attorney

6-21-23

Date