

# MIAMI BEACH

## COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Rickelle Williams, Interim City Manager *RW*

DATE: July 24, 2024

TITLE: A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, ACCEPTING THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE FINANCE AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCY COMMITTEE, AT ITS JUNE 28, 2024 MEETING, TO APPROVE MAKING A BUDGET PRIORITY DURING THE FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET PROCESS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$54,000.00 TO THE MIAMI BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT LGBTQIA INITIATIVES FUND.

### RECOMMENDATION

The Administration recommends that the City Commission accept the recommendation of the Finance and Economic Resiliency Committee to approve making a budget priority during the Fiscal Year 2025 budget process in the amount of \$54,000 to the Miami Beach Police Department's LGBTQIA initiatives fund.

### BACKGROUND/HISTORY

At the January 31, 2024 City Commission meeting, at the request of Commissioner Laura Dominguez, the Mayor and City Commission approved a referral (C4 V) to the Finance and Economic Resiliency Committee ("FERC") requesting:

- A comprehensive review of the MBPD's LGBTQIA+ outreach initiatives.
- A discussion of the types of social services programs available to the LGBTQIA+ community in the city, including but not limited to drug testing services.
- An exploration of collaborations between the City, non-profit organizations and local establishments to strengthen and promote crucial services in the City.

The item was referred to the March 22, 2024 FERC meeting agenda and deferred to the June 28, 2024 meeting where it was moved to the full Commission with favorable recommendation to prioritize adding \$54,000 to the Miami Beach Police Department's LGBTQ initiatives budget with funds indexed to account for inflation as part of the Fiscal Year 2025 budget process.

### ANALYSIS

Based on July 2023 data from the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau, an estimated 1.65 million U.S. LGBTQIA+ community members (excluding South Florida residents) visited greater Miami in the 12 preceding months for an overnight trip and spent \$1.7 billion while doing so. A solid 15% of these travelers spent 3 nights in the area, and the average spent per person for all travelers per stay was \$1,050 for accommodations, food and beverage, local transportation, entertainment/tickets, and shopping. That data only covered out of state tourism.

Based on data from the Williams Institute and *Queerty*, the LGBTQIA+ population in the Greater Miami is estimated at 230,000 and in Miami Beach at 18,000. Based on data from the Greater Miami LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce, the LGBTQIA+ annual purchasing power in Miami-Dade County is estimated at \$9 Billion.

The City of Miami Beach is host to several major LGBTQIA+ events, including the Winter Party Festival, the National LGBTQ Task Force gala, Miami Beach Pride, among various others. Miami Beach is also home to several well-known and well-visited LGBTQIA+ establishments. Though the above data includes greater Miami or Miami-Dade County, it is therefore undeniable that the LGBTQIA+ tourism and LGBTQIA+ purchasing power has a tremendous impact on the City of Miami Beach. It is therefore essential to provide programs, events, and services to ensure an attractive, safe, and empowering environment for LGBTQIA+ tourists, visitors, residents, and businesses/organizations.

Currently, only two LGBTQIA+ service initiatives are funded by Resolution: a \$75,000 partnership with SAVE and a \$50,000 partnership with Pridelines, both falling under the office of Education & Performance Initiatives (see description later in this memorandum). Other initiatives, past, ongoing, or upcoming, as well as training for Parks and Recreation and beyond do not have a set budget and instead rely on available departmental funds and leadership to support the activities and associated costs. This is not optimal as it does not guarantee that certain initiatives will have funding and take place. Even if the activities are carried out, the arrangement does not allow for continuation or enhancements as each initiative is on a one-time basis.

This item, therefore, presents an opportunity for the Commission to allocate any dedicated departmental funding deemed appropriate to secure continual LGBTQIA+ services. Below are the identified existing services, programs, and partnerships related to the LGBTQIA+ community in the City of Miami Beach.

## **POLICE DEPARTMENT**

The Miami Beach Police Department (MBPD) has always been supportive of and engaged with the LGBTQIA+ community. For years, retired Officer Juan Sanchez worked unofficially and officially as the Department's LGBTQIA+ Liaison and was instrumental in developing relationships, partnerships, and mutually beneficial programs. Officer Sanchez retired in January 2019, leaving a gap in the agency in relation to LGBTQIA+ initiatives. In 2022, Officer Christopher Bess became the new LGBTQIA+ Liaison, and even though this assignment not full-time, he was able to take on multiple initiatives before taking on the role of Public Information Officer (PIO) under the newly appointed Chief Wayne Jones. Below is a list of Department initiatives:

### **Organizational Culture**

The Department is working on ensuring that it creates a welcoming and empowering environment for all employees. The Department developed an LGBTQIA+ Liaison Program and intends to create a policy for the LGBTQIA+ Liaison assignment, ensure LGBTQIA+ representation in its Peer and Chaplain programs, and ensure that all employees are optimally trained on matters relating to LGBTQIA+.

Status: Ongoing

### **Safe Place Initiative (SPI)**

The Department recognizes that the LGBTQIA+ community is acutely vulnerable to unprovoked acts of violence. As a result, the Safe Place Initiative (SPI) was established to provide victims, specifically individuals of the LGBTQIA+ community who have been subjected to a hate crime, a safe location to seek assistance. With this initiative, participating local businesses, municipal facilities or organizations receive the following distinguishable 'Safe Place' decal, which is posted and easily identifiable by victims of LGBTQIA+ biased hate crimes. A website showcasing an interactive map of participating businesses will be publicized and accessible to provide members of the LGBTQIA+ a clear understanding of friendly and supportive businesses where they can safely seek help.

Participating businesses and organizations will receive training allowing them to rapidly

assess potential hate crime situations and reach out effectively to the MBPD for help.

Status: This program was in place several years ago. Currently, the Department is working on a re-launch by June 2024.



### **Stop the Hate. Don't be a Victim Program**

This initiative is an eight-week interactive program for vulnerable populations and more specifically for the LGBTQIA+ community. It aims to provide participants with a unique opportunity to learn how to protect themselves and minimize their chances of being the victim of a biased-motivated crime. Participants will take part in various training segments, including scenario-based situations, active shooter, fraud/dating applications, transgender interactions, firearms, self-defense, and other pertinent topics.

Status: The MBPD is working on launching this program in the coming months.

### **Engaging and Building Relationships with Transgender Communities Training**

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Community Relations Service (CRS) works to prevent and respond to hate crimes against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning (LGBTQ) communities. The CRS team offers a three-hour train-the-trainer program for training unit officers and other relevant employees to learn from subject matter experts about current issues impacting the transgender community, as well as best practices, policies, and strategies for improving partnerships between the transgender and law enforcement communities.

Status: The Department is engaged in preliminary discussions with the DOJ Community Relations Service to potentially bring this training to the Department.

MBPD is also involved in the LGBTQIA+ community in various ways, including:

### **City of Miami Beach's LGBTQIA+ Advisory Committee**

The Department regularly meets with members of the City of Miami Beach's LGBTQIA+ Advisory Committee or attends the Committee's monthly meetings to ensure the Committee is aware of the MBPD's LGBTQIA+ initiatives, including policies, training, and events as well as to discuss issues and opportunities to improve safety and quality of life

for LGBTQIA+ residents, visitors, and tourists.

### **South Florida Law Enforcement LGBTQ+ Coalition**

The Department is a proud member of this Coalition which gathers LGBTQIA+ liaisons from the 34 Miami-Dade County municipalities on a monthly basis to advocate reforms of police policies and procedures to be inclusive, to participate in or create events that promote unity between law enforcement personnel and the community served, to elevate standards of police institutions by offering the public a means of communication with an officer they feel most comfortable speaking to, and to devise, cultivate and disseminate systems of prevention of crimes against the LGBTQIA+ community.

### **Greater Miami LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce Holigay Toy Drive**

For several years now, the Department has partnered with the Greater Miami LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce, located next to police headquarters, for the Chamber's yearly Holigay event, which collect toys that the Department then distributes to local children during the Department's holiday community event.

### **Miami Beach Pride**

For years, the Department has partnered with the Miami Beach Pride organization to ensure the safety of all participants and attendees to the Pride days or weeks events. The MBPD leadership also proudly walks in the parade every year.

### **National LGBTQ Task Force**

The Department has partnered with the National LGBTQ Task Force organization over multiple years to ensure the safety of all participants and attendees to the Winter Party Festival events.

Additionally, the Department has supported the National LGBTQ Task Force Gala on annual basis through the presence of several LGBTQ employees and members of the Command Staff.

### **MBPD Pride Car**

The Department understands the importance of visibility and presence in the LGBTQIA+ community. For several years, the Department has therefore had a Pride-wrapped police SUV available for display at different events and for important LGBTQIA+ days. The Department presented its new Pride car at the National LGBTQ Task Force Winter Party Festival on February 28, 2024.

## **MBPD Opportunities for Improvement**

Excluding human resources, one the greatest obstacles has been the lack of dedicated funding for LGBTQIA+ initiatives. Though the Department's budget is and appears significant, the priority is placed on personnel, equipment, and overtime-related costs to ensure the safety of residents, visitors, and tourists. As a result, LGBTQIA+ initiatives are often pending the identification of available funding, often delaying or preventing the launching or continuation of initiatives. Funding is required to run programs or events, to print educative or training material, to represent and participate at certain community events and to transport employees to and/or host training sessions or conferences among various other activities.

To more effectively support LGBTQIA+ initiatives and activities, attached is a sample budget with line items and pricing.

## **PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT**

Below are programming initiatives that the Parks & Recreation Department has or is in the process

of carrying out:

- Partnering with Pridelines on a LGBTQIA+ youth proms which offer a safe, inclusive space for young people to celebrate their identity without fear of judgment. The proms provide validation and recognition for those who may have missed out on traditional proms, creating a more accepting society. Held in 2019, the last youth prom had 105 participants in attendance
- Fantasy Theatre Factory – Celebrate our Families event, celebrating the diverse backgrounds of South Florida families including LGBTQIA+ families. Held in February of 2024, the last event had 175 participants
- Pride Family Night at the Pool – free community event for families that coincides with Pride Week. Held in 2022, the last event was attended by 225 participants



The leadership of the Parks & Recreation Department has identified LGBTQIA+ training for staff working with LGBTQIA+ youth and teen participants for potential improvement. Training would help identify and address critical scenarios such as bullying and peer pressure, among others.

### EDUCATION & PERFORMANCE INITIATIVES

#### Miami Beach Cares

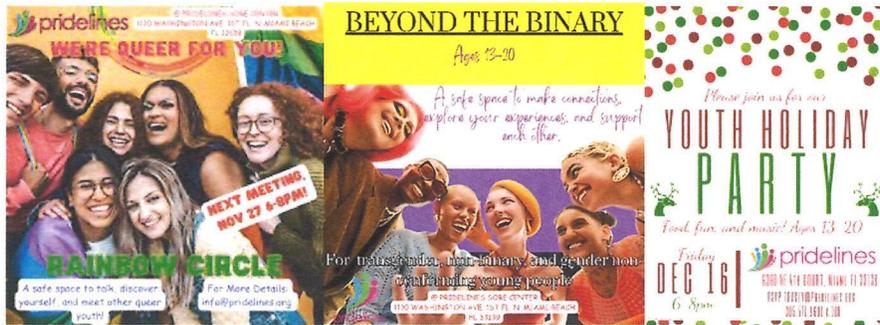
Miami Beach Cares was developed by the SAVE Foundation with \$75,000 funding from the City of Miami Beach. Miami Beach Cares is intended for use as a public resource guide for individuals, families, and allies seeking information, community, and services focused on LGBTQIA+ issues. Miami Beach Cares and its directory feature organizations and businesses that serve the LGBTQIA+ community throughout Miami Beach and Miami-Dade County. Link: <https://www.miamibeachcares.lgbt/>



## Pridelines LGBTQIA+ Youth Safe Space

In 2023, the City of Miami Beach's Commission awarded Pridelines, Inc. \$50,000 for the development and implementation of a safe space program for LGBTQIA+ Miami Beach youth. The partnership includes year-round programing and events, including:

- Rainbow Circle (age 13-19, once a month) – a peer-led LGBTQIA+ support and discussion youth group covering a range of age-appropriate topics like coming out, healthy relationships, bullying, peer pressure, drugs and alcohol, positive identity / image development, self-esteem, anxiety and depression, college and careers, as well as civics, social, and environmental justice activism. Youth are encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings without fear in a safe and supportive environment
- Beyond the Binary (age 13-19, once a month) – a peer-led support and discussion group for transgender and gender non-binary / non-conforming youth focusing on age-appropriate topics like holistic wellness / wellbeing, as well as the cultivation of long-lasting friendships, and a sense of belonging and affirming community. This is one of the few programs serving transgender youth in Miami-Dade County
- Fab Fridays (once a month) – offers LGBTQIA+ youth a fun and safe space to socialize with friends. The activities include game nights, movie nights, sleepovers, art projects, and more. This provides opportunities for youth to build connections, develop friendships, and express themselves in a welcoming and inclusive environment
- Miami Beach Pride weekend activity



## OFFICE OF THE MAYOR & COMMISSION

### **LGBTQIA+ Committee:**

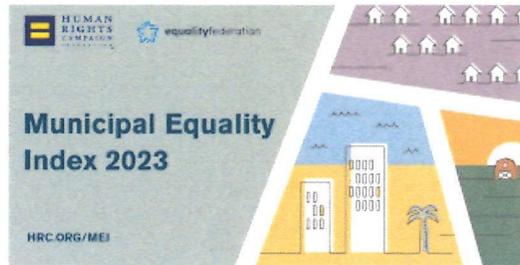
**Powers and duties:** The committee shall make advisory recommendations to the City Commission and the City Manager on initiatives to be implemented and supported by the city regarding a variety of issues to ensure the well-being and quality of life of the Miami Beach LGBTQIA+ Community. The committee shall annually compile and submit, in a timely manner, with the assistance of the staff liaison, city data and information to be scored by the human rights campaign's ("HRC") municipal equality index ("MEI") on the city's non- discrimination laws, policies, and services. The committee shall also make recommendations to the city commission and the city manager regarding any new or amended laws, ordinances, or policies that may need to be enacted in order to receive all possible points on the Municipal Equality Index (MEI) each year.

**Composition:** The Committee consists of fifteen (15) voting members, with three (3) members to be directly appointed by the Mayor, and two (2) members to be directly appointed by each City Commissioner. Notwithstanding the preceding sentence, the initial membership of the Committee shall be comprised of those current members of the Mayor's Gay Business Development Committee, choosing to serve on the Committee, with any additional members (as required to complete the total number of members of the

Committee) to be appointed at-large by a majority vote of the City Commission.

**Human Rights Campaign Municipal Equality Index (MEI)**

The MEI examines how inclusive municipal laws, policies, and services are of LGBTQIA+ people who live and work there. Cities are rated based on non-discrimination laws, the municipality as an employer, municipal services, law enforcement and leadership on LGBTQIA+ equality. In 2023, a record-breaking 129 cities, constituting over 25 percent of all MEI-rated cities, have achieved the highest possible score of 100, an increase from the 120 achieved in 2022. In 20 states, 76 cities have reached scores exceeding 85, even in the absence of non-discrimination statutes that explicitly safeguard sexual orientation and gender identity. The City of Miami Beach submitted its entry and is awaiting its score card.



**FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

The included Police Department sample line-item budget presents a breakdown of personnel, educational and promotional items, training and conferences, hospitality, community events and programs totaling \$54,000. It does not include potential training proposed by the Parks & Recreation Department for its employees.

**CONCLUSION**

The City of Miami Beach has at its disposition a robust menu of initiatives, services, recurring events and partnerships to benefit and support the local LGBTQIA+ youth and communities. Notwithstanding, the City could improve in the areas of training and budget enhancements through which to solidify, enhance, and expand City events and initiatives, sexually transmitted infection and drug testing services, local, state and national partnerships as well as overall outcomes and LGBTQIA+ youth and community well-being.

**Applicable Area**

Citywide

**Is this a “Residents Right to Know” item, pursuant to City Code Section 2-17?**

No

**Is this item related to a G.O. Bond Project?**

No

**Was this Agenda Item initially requested by a lobbyist which, as defined in Code Sec. 2-481, includes a principal engaged in lobbying?** No

If so, specify the name of lobbyist(s) and principal(s):

**Department**

Police/EPI

**Sponsor(s)**

Commissioner Laura Dominguez

**Co-sponsor(s)**

Commissioner Tanya K. Bhatt  
Commissioner Joseph Magazine  
Commissioner Alex Fernandez