

MAYOR REMARKS FOR HB 1365 PLAN

Good morning. This is an important day for Jacksonville as we announce our plans to address Florida House Bill 1365 – the new state law that goes into effect on October 1 and makes it illegal to sleep in public spaces.

In every community conversation I've been to over the past year, one of the things I heard most often was the need to address homelessness. This challenge is not isolated to a single area of our city. Citizens in all 14 council districts asked me to work on this significant issue.

With that feedback in mind, I directed a working group to create a 5-year strategic plan that mitigates homelessness. Our overall goal is to achieve functional zero. This means that the number of people entering homelessness is equal to the number of people finding permanent housing. It also means turning homelessness into a rare, brief, one-time occurrence in a person's life.

Our working group was ahead of the curve when they began this work in January. As HB 1365 moved through the legislative session, we adjusted our plans to ensure Jacksonville complied with the

eventual state law – and that it still fit within our overall efforts to address homelessness.

Our 12-point plan increases data-driven decision-making, transparency, and accountability. It increases our bed capacity in existing shelters with the scalability of hotel rooms as a backup. We put more funding into outreach and intake teams that connect people with housing and wraparound service options. It builds on JSO's existing Homeward Bound program that ensures we are focusing on the individuals who live here. And all these pieces work together to create a 24/7 network of places to go where no one is turned away.

We also wanted to avoid having a tent city. So, another recommendation you'll see is pairing a homeless village with the services people need to get back on their feet. We would have failed if we only built a place to temporarily house people without putting them on the path to becoming a functioning member of society once again.

Our proposed 2024-2025 budget allocates \$10 million towards this effort. We anticipate the total cost of this initiative to be nearly \$14 million and we are calling on the private sector to close that gap.

None of this critical funding is optional. We absolutely need it to address the unfunded mandate that has been handed down to us by the state, and we need it to make substantial progress on reducing homelessness. Without this plan, we will be at risk for lawsuits starting January 1.

I'm incredibly proud of the collaborative effort that included dozens of meetings, hundreds of hours, 20 leaders, and many more community voices. The HB 1365 plan is also part of a larger 5-year strategy that is still being finalized and that we'll make available in the weeks ahead. Our working group brought together multiple city departments, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, non-profit community, faith-based organizations, and affordable housing developers to the table.

This final product shows what is possible when we unite towards a common goal and build the public-private partnerships that bring our shared vision to life.

There are so many people to thank, and you'll see the members of our working group on the second page of the plan. To each of you who contributed to this effort, you have my gratitude. I do want to

specifically shout out Sulzbacher Center CEO Cindy Funkhouser, Changing Homelessness CEO Dawn Gilman, and Ability Housing CEO Shannon Nazworth. They are the experts we relied upon throughout this process. And you'll hear more from Cindy and Dawn on the plan in a few minutes.

I also want to thank the working group co-leads: our administration's Director of Strategic Partnerships Tracye Polson and Affordable Housing Director Josh Hicks. They put an immense amount of work into this plan on top of their already busy roles.

The first recommendation of the working group was to identify a person in the Mayor's Office to oversee the execution of this plan. I'm excited to announce that Tracye will be that person. Having a single point person will ensure that resources are optimized, and opportunities are not missed.

Ask any expert for the most effective way to reduce homelessness, and they will tell you to build more affordable housing units. Josh will continue to play a critical role leading our affordable housing efforts for the city and working closely with Tracye on homelessness. We already have nearly 4,000

affordable housing units that will be completed by the end of 2025 – and there will be more on the way.

I'm grateful for the partnership with Sheriff Waters and the JSO team throughout the process of developing this plan. It's our goal to make sure they have the needed support when it comes to enforcement of the new state law. Undersheriff Shawn Coarsey is here with us today, and he'll provide us with more insight on what that looks like.

I'm also grateful for continued collaboration with the City Council. For several years, they have studied the issue of homelessness and developed programs to address it. And over the past year, we collaborated on millions of dollars of programs that keep people from becoming homeless in the first place, while working to address the difficult challenge of chronic homelessness.

Without further ado, I'd like to welcome **Councilman Michael Boylan** who has been at the center of these efforts.

[SPEAKERS THAT FOLLOW]

- ***Dawn Gilman, Changing Homelessness***
- ***Cindy Funkhouser, Sulzbacher Center***

- ***Undersheriff Shawn Coarsey, JSO***