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Homeless feeding law makes good sense

As a multigenerational downtown Miami property owner, co-founder of the Flagler Business Improvement District, and a Miami Downtown Development Authority (DDA) board member, I have had first-hand experience with the City of Miami's ongoing efforts to address the persistent health, safety, and quality-of-life issues that have historically accompanied homelessness.

Working with partners like Camillus House and Hermanos de la Calle, the city and the DDA have launched successful programs such as the PitStop public restroom initiative and the Downtown Enhancement Team, which employ formerly homeless individuals who provide an essential service keeping our urban core clean.

The city commission's recent passage of an ordinance to regulate large group street feedings will ensure our community's homeless have access to donated food in a safe, clean, controlled and dignified manner.

This is critical considering the current health risks in our community, particularly as experts emphasize the importance of hand-washing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Without this ordinance, our homeless neighbors would be at greater risk of eating in unsafe and unsanitary conditions, and litter would continue to pile up on our streets.

While well-meaning, the groups behind unorganized feedings don't always consider the long-term and wide-ranging negative effects of their generous actions.

The city's ordinance allows charitable organizations to serve the community, and is a common-sense solution that balances the needs and dignity of the homeless with those of downtown residents, visitors, businesses, and property owners.

- Gary Ressler,
principal,
Tilia Family of Companies,
Miami

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