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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Miami Beach Looks to Tighten Marijuana Laws Ahead of Spring Break**

— Ordinance Passes First Reading at Jan. 31 Commission Meeting —

**Miami Beach, FL** – The Miami Beach City Commission voted to remove an optional civil penalty for people caught with 20 grams or less of marijuana or possessing drug paraphernalia. The approval requires a second reading and final approval on Feb. 21.

“We’re shutting the door on Spring Break, re-criminalizing marijuana and imposing our strictest consequences for reckless behavior,” said Miami Beach Commissioner Alex Fernandez, who sponsored the change. “The anything-goes party atmosphere is over.”

The optional \$100 civil penalty did not prove to be an adequate deterrent to discourage people from smoking or possessing marijuana in public. Since the optional civil penalty went into effect eight years ago, the Miami Beach Police Department reported issuing only a limited number of civil citations in lieu of arrests.

“The optional \$100 civil penalty didn’t deter public marijuana use. Instead, people were emboldened to disregard our laws,” emphasized Miami Beach Mayor Steven Meiner. “Miami Beach enforces its laws reinforcing our commitment as a law and order city.”

Miami Beach is the only city in Miami-Dade County that operates its own Municipal Prosecution Program, allowing the city to prosecute its own criminal municipal ordinance violations. Smoking marijuana in public carries a criminal penalty of up to 60 days in jail and/or a \$500 fine.

The tougher stance on marijuana is only one element of a comprehensive plan to address the various aspects of spring break that diminish the quality of life for Miami Beach residents and visitors. Other elements of the plan address traffic impacts, alcohol sales, unlawful gatherings, excessive noise and illegal short-term rentals.

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