

How did Miami succeed with panhandlers where New Bedford failed?

A friend of mine visited Miami and noticed this “no panhandling” sign:



I immediately thought, why can't New Bedford have an ordinance like this? A question New Bedford politicians should be asking is, how did Miami succeed against the ALCU in passing a law that punishes panhandlers from setting up on busy intersections? Is it possible to bring it to Massachusetts and New Bedford? Panhandlers in New Bedford have literally taken over every busy intersection in the city and not much seems to be done about it.

I recently published an article ***Stop blaming the panhandlers, blame the people who give to them***, but we all know there are too many suckers ... I mean compassionate people out there buying panhandlers heroin/alcohol ... I mean ending poverty, and we also know they aren't going to stop giving. Instead, we need to look to Miami.

Currently, **New Bedford City Councilors are proposing a motion to put up signs to curb panhandling**, but the signs are designed to deter people that give money to panhandlers, not punish those who panhandle. Should the motion pass, I have a feeling we will be seeing a lot photos and videos on social media with panhandlers standing under the signs with people giving to them.

A quick Google search reveals **Miami's code against panhandling**. This should be the starting point for anyone looking to start a no panhandling ordinance with some teeth in their city.

The ordinance's purpose basically says it's for economic reasons:

"Regulation is required because panhandling in certain areas threatens the economic vitality of those areas, impairing the city's long term goals of attracting citizens, businesses and tourist to these certain areas and, consequently, the city overall. The city has substantial interests in protecting the city's investment in certain areas, protecting tourism,

encouraging expansion of the city's economic base, and protecting the city's economy."

Makes sense, right? The ordinance basically protects all the city streets, the downtown area and other no-panhandler zones. So what happens if you get caught panhandling?

"The first violation of this provision shall be punishable by a fine of not more than \$100.00 and 30 days imprisonment; second and subsequent violations shall be punishable by a fine of not more than \$200.00 and 60 days imprisonment."

But there are alternative options for those that want it:

"Alternative programs. Nothing herein shall limit the discretion of the police, court personnel, and judges from referring individuals suspected, charged, or convicted of a violation of this provision to treatment programs or facilities as an alternative to prosecution or imprisonment, provided that the individual freely consents. For homeless individuals, such alternative programs shall include, but not be limited to, the Miami-Dade County Homeless Assistance Project."

Imagine that. Get caught panhandling? Face jail time and/or pay a fine ... or get treatment for substance abuse or help for homelessness. It's refreshing to see a tough, smart, yet compassionate ordinance alive and well. New Bedford legislators should immediately head down to Miami to do some research and find out how it made it past the ACLU.

New Bedford residents can thank me for eliminating panhandlers and legislators can thank me later for the tan.