

CITY OF CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-66

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA, DECLARING PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSION FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM AND OTHER SPECIAL NEEDS, AND URGING ACTION BY NATIONAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, BUSINESSES, AND RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES CONSISTENT WITH THESE PRINCIPLES.

WHEREAS, April is National Autism Acceptance Month; and

WHEREAS, Acceptance Month emphasizes the need for public awareness to promote acceptance, celebrate differences, and be more inclusive towards autistic individuals around us; and

WHEREAS, approximately 1 in 31 children have an autism spectrum disorder according to a recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and

WHEREAS, the United States of America is a signatory of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which supports the inclusion and accommodation of children and adults with special needs and disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the Convention has identified the following core principles of inclusion:

- a. Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons;
- b. Non-discrimination;
- c. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society;
- d. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity;
- e. Equality of opportunity;
- f. Accessibility;
- g. Equality between men and women;
- h. Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities; and

WHEREAS, inclusion is an attitude, an approach, and a mindset, that welcomes and facilitates participation by those with disabilities and special needs, and encourages accommodations beyond those required by law; and

WHEREAS, meaningful acceptance extends beyond awareness and includes inclusive education, employment pathways, accessible public spaces, and first responder training that supports the safety and well-being of individuals with autism; and

WHEREAS, the City demonstrates its commitment to inclusion through its Advisory Board on Disability Affairs, which advises and provides input to City staff regarding matters affecting individuals with disabilities in Coral Gables in an effort to support full inclusion and accommodation; and

WHEREAS, with participation from the Disability Affairs Board and the School & Community Relations Committee, the City obtained a self-contained classroom for students with disabilities in a public school located within City boundaries at Ponce De Leon Middle School; and

WHEREAS, the City is committed to integrated employment and has partnered with Best Buddies and the de Moya Foundation to hire individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to help people with IDD reach their full potential and become as independent as possible and the City is also working with the Chamber so that City businesses can deliver meaningful employment, fair wages, and career advancement for individuals with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the City has hosted Project Victory students from Coral Gables Highschool and has done so since the 2022-2023 school year. Project Victory is a program developed by Miami-Dade County Public Schools to prepare students with disabilities for financial, personal/social, and/or independent functioning through the acquisition of employability skills essential for success in the workplace. Project Victory students work at City Hall, the 427 Building, and the Public Safety Building and benefit from on-the-job training and real-life experiences; and

WHEREAS, the City is committed to the principles of inclusion as demonstrated through the Coral Gables Police Department's collaboration with the Disability Independence Group and UM-NSU CARD (Center for Autism and Related Disabilities) in the development of The Wallet Card Project of the Disability Independence Group, and related training videos, which is a nationally regarded program that assists individuals in informing governmental and police officials of their special needs through The Wallet Card, and trains police officers in interactions with individuals on the autism spectrum and with other special needs; and

WHEREAS, the City's Police Department, to further autism education and promote inclusion, acceptance, and understanding, has wrapped a City Police Vehicle with the autism logo; and

WHEREAS, the City in April of 2021 launched its GUIDE Program. The GUIDE Program is a voluntary program offered to residents with individuals and/or "special circumstances," who live within the City. Residents or parents/legal guardians of a resident can provide information about themselves or about the resident that they are registering that can be crucial to GUIDE the City's first responders to more effectively interact with that individual. Understanding the enrolled individual's disability or complex medical need prior to responding to a scene, allows first responders to continue acting with care and diligence

while providing more efficient services, primarily in cases involving safely locating an enrolled individual; and

WHEREAS, the City's commitment to the principles of inclusion also can be seen in the City's Community Recreation Department, where all programs are inclusive. Sensory Friendly 4th of July, Gentle Practice Trick or Treat and a Gentle Egg Hunt have been developed as inclusive activities and are hosted annually. In addition the Community Recreation Department hosts other activities such as My Squad, which is a monthly social gathering hosted by the City for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism; and

WHEREAS, the City's commitment is also demonstrated in the passage of a resolution declaring principles of inclusion for individuals with Autism and other special needs each April beginning in 2016 as well as the passage of a resolution declaring principles of inclusion for all individuals with disabilities each October beginning in 2016; and

WHEREAS, for World Autism Acceptance Day in support of understanding and acceptance for individuals with autism, and on April 2, an autism flag designed by students with autism will be raised at the Coral Gables Public Safety Building;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF CORAL GABLES:

SECTION 1. The foregoing "**WHEREAS**" clauses are hereby ratified and confirmed as being true and correct and are hereby made a specific part of this Resolution upon adoption hereof.

SECTION 2. The City expresses its commitment to the principles of inclusion of children and adults with special needs and disabilities in all aspects of its governance and services, and seeks to welcome and facilitate such participation.

SECTION 3. The City urges businesses to express their commitment to the principles of inclusion in both employment and commerce.

SECTION 4. The City urges developers, homeowner associations, and condominium associations to adopt policies supporting the principles of inclusion in residential communities.

SECTION 5. The City urges universities and other places of learning to prioritize programs supporting inclusion of individuals with special needs and disabilities.

SECTION 6. The City urges national, state, and local governments to express their commitment to the principles of inclusion as well, and to continue expanding services to children and adults with special needs and disabilities.

SECTION 7. The Advisory Board on Disability Affairs is commended for its excellent work in this area and is directed to review the City's initiatives to promote inclusion on an ongoing basis, and provide input to City staff to assist the City in fulfilling this goal.

SECTION 8. The School and Community Relations Board is commended for its excellent work in this area as well and is directed to continue its Special Needs Initiative and to continue working with Miami-Dade Public Schools and UM-NSU CARD to expand opportunities in Coral Gables for individuals with special needs and disabilities.

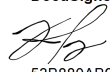
SECTION 9. The City Clerk is directed to send a copy of this resolution to the National League of Cities, National Association of Counties, Florida League of Cities, Florida Association of Counties, Miami-Dade County League of Cities, Miami-Dade County, Miami-Dade Public Schools, and municipalities in Miami-Dade County.

SECTION 10. This Resolution shall become effective upon the date of its passage and adoption hereof.

PASSED AND ADOPTED THIS TENTH DAY OF MARCH, A.D., 2026.

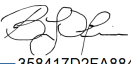
(Moved: Fernandez / Seconded: Anderson)
(Yeas: Anderson, Castro, Fernandez, Lara, Lago)
(Unanimous: 5-0 Vote)
(Agenda Item: H-1)

APPROVED:

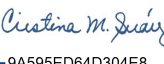
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VINCE LAGO
MAYOR

ATTEST:

DocuSigned by:

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BILLY Y. URQUIA
CITY CLERK

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:

DocuSigned by:

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CRISTINA M. SUÀREZ
CITY ATTORNEY