

## **PART I: INTRO AND OVERCOMING CHALLENGES**

### **I. Introduction**

Good morning, Miami-Dade County. Buenos días. Bonjour. It is truly the honor of my life to serve as your Mayor. I address you today with gladness and hope, to let you know that the state of our County is stronger than ever, thanks to our shared spirit of community and ability to adapt to these changing and challenging times. Because of you, our residents, I know we can look for an even better tomorrow.

I want to thank Chairman Pepe Diaz for the gracious introduction, Vice-Chair Oliver Gilbert for the beautiful blessing, and Commissioner Sally Heyman for the warm welcome to her home territory, District 4. I'm proud to join you virtually from Greynolds Park in the North end of our spectacular County, with the Oleta River right behind us.

One year ago, I delivered my very first State of the County address to the residents of Miami-Dade.

The year that unfolded since has been unlike any other in Miami-Dade's history – one that has tested us all in new ways.

En el último año, nuestra comunidad ha enfrentado muchos desafíos, desde la pandemia hasta la tragedia de Surfside. Pero juntos los hemos superado.

We continue to face a deadly pandemic – leaning on science and data, navigating each new twist and turn to protect our community, while fighting to help the hardest-hit families get back on their feet, and supporting businesses struggling to rebound.

We confronted a gun violence epidemic that exploded nationwide as a result of the pandemic, taking strong and decisive steps to prevent violence and solve crimes, delivering real results that have brought us national recognition.

And we were all rocked by the tragedy in Surfside, when Champlain Towers fell in the middle of the night – one of the worst building collapses in modern history. Our community stepped up, united, as the world watched, to address the crisis and to make sure it could never happen again.

Through each of these chapters, we were reminded that despite the many perils, our community will always come together in the face of tragedy. Through acts of kindness, courage, and solidarity, we overcome and emerge stronger. We have proven over and over that no challenge is too great when we stand together, united.

La unión hace la fuerza.

L'union fait la force.

Through all we have faced, and no doubt because of it, we are a community uniquely ready to take on the future. Our economy

was recently ranked the most-recovered in the entire nation. We are diverse, innovative, caring and unified – a true model for the rest of the country.

In 2022, we will continue to build for the future on the solid foundation we've laid together.

We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to capitalize on the passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, investing hundreds of millions of dollars in transportation, broadband, water, the environment and more, while creating thousands of local jobs.

To prepare for the new economy, we are investing in solar power, electric vehicles, and protecting our bay. These measures will safeguard our environment now and for the future.

We are making major investments in rental housing that people can afford, and programs to help more working people buy homes.

And we will accelerate our recovery by doubling down on investments that help businesses succeed in the post-pandemic economy, connecting our workforce to high-paying jobs in the highest-growth industries.

Together, we are tackling these challenges and building a stronger, more resilient, future ready Miami-Dade County.

Juntos, vamos a construir un Miami-Dade más fuerte y listo para el futuro.

Ansanm, nou pral konstwi yon Konte Miami-Dade ki pi solid, e ki pare pou lavni an.

## **COVID**

When last year began, the COVID-19 vaccine had only just become available, without a state or national plan to ensure an efficient and fair distribution.

We leapt into action, launching a registration system in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole.

As supply became widely available, we created large-scale vaccination sites across the County and hosted pop-up events to bring vaccines directly to hard to reach neighborhoods.

From the very beginning, we worked hard to make vaccines readily available for you and your families, no matter your zip code.

We first prioritized vulnerable seniors with homebound vaccinations.

Hundreds of County employees volunteered to be a part of our VACS Now outreach teams, knocking on over 400,000 doors and bringing information to households from Hialeah to Homestead.

We launched campaigns to educate and encourage the community to protect themselves, and to take the shot.

Today, we lead the State in our vaccination rate, well over the national average. This result is more than a public health milestone, it is a true logistical feat - and it would not have been possible without our Chief Medical Officer Dr. Peter Paige and frontline healthcare heroes.

I'm especially proud that, even when COVID cases were low, we never stopped providing free tests and vaccinations.

We stayed ready, we prepared for the future, and we never let down our guard.

Durante la pandemia, nunca hemos bajado la guardia, hemos seguido trabajando en prevención y preparándonos para el futuro.

Keeping this COVID prevention program in place meant that we were able to scale up to meet the enormous increase in demand as Omicron surged, as daily test volume at our county Sites doubled to over 70,000 a day.

Just in the last several weeks, we distributed nearly 300,000 at-home tests, with county staff working over the holidays to keep residents safe.

While our fight against COVID is far from over, the ground we've covered demonstrates all that we can accomplish when we work together, united.

## **SURFSIDE**

We all can recall another time last year when the whole community came together to handle a crisis that none of us could have possibly imagined.

In the early morning hours of June 24, Miami-Dade Fire Rescue responded to reports of a building collapse at Champlain Towers South in the Town of Surfside.

Our firefighters ran directly into what remained of the tower to pull out survivors. In the days and weeks that followed, the rescue teams braved blistering heat, pouring rain, fire and smoke to search for the missing in the rubble.

All told, we lost 98 loved ones — parents, children, coworkers, cherished friends. The lives of countless families here and around the world were changed forever in a few short seconds.

Please join me in a moment of silence to honor and remember those we lost in Surfside.

In the aftermath of this unthinkable tragedy, in their moment of greatest need, our community stepped up to care for those who lost everything.

Businesses donated food, water, and supplies. People at home and across the GLOBE contributed millions of dollars to support victims and survivors.

And through it all, the public servants of your Miami-Dade County government, were there — rising to meet every challenge with enormous compassion, courage, and care.

A tragedy of this scale demanded a whole of government response, and our coordinated efforts spanned nearly every County department. We worked hand in hand with our local, state and federal government partners.

Police from across the county were there to support the rescue operation on the ground so that the search teams could continue their mission day after day.

As the sun rose that first morning, we immediately set up a place for displaced families to gather and a hotline. Our team answered thousands of calls from those desperately seeking information and opened thousands of missing person reports.

From the very beginning, we put the families — those who lost loved ones and those who lost homes — at the center of every decision we made. Within days, we launched a comprehensive Family Assistance Center to provide essential services from dozens of agencies under one roof.

And we wasted no time searching for answers. We immediately took steps to ensure a tragedy like this would never, ever happen again.

In the wake of the collapse, I directed staff to conduct an audit of all pending building recertification cases. We created an online portal so the public could easily view information about their own building's safety record.

And we've taken steps to strengthen our building code — such as shortening the recertification period to 30 years instead of 40. I was proud to partner with Chairman Diaz to convene local, state and federal policymakers to drive forward reforms at all levels. I'd like to thank Commissioner Rene Garcia for leveraging his experience in Tallahassee and his extensive legislative knowledge to help lead this charge and make our residents safer.

I am so proud of the way my team and all of our community partners came together for Surfside and how we are working together to build an even safer Miami-Dade now and for the future. Commissioner Heyman, who represents this community, also spared no effort to ensure all those who needed help could access it.

## **GUN VIOLENCE**

Along with the pandemic and the Surfside tragedy, we were facing yet another crisis: the national gun violence epidemic, which came to a head in our community last summer.

In 2021, we acted swiftly to stem the tide of violence and keep residents safe — by tackling root causes and building safer, more stable neighborhoods.



In June, we took a historic step forward to invest in long-term violence prevention and public safety. The Board of County Commissioners, led by Commissioner Keon Hardemon, passed our visionary Peace and Prosperity Plan — made possible by our licensing agreement with the FTX Arena, home of the Miami Heat. The Peace and Prosperity Plan is a 20 year, \$90 million investment to create jobs and internships for at-risk youth, along with other proven prevention, intervention, re-entry, and enforcement programs.

We're working across departments to provide our children with new opportunities and open doors to a brighter future. We created the Office of Neighborhood Safety to prevent crime and assist those who committed crimes and served their time, to become productive citizens.

We launched Operation Summer Heat and then Operation Community Shield to increase targeted enforcement in the communities most affected by gun violence.

Today, the results speak clearly.

Miami-Dade has seen the number of shootings CUT IN HALF and a 15% reduction in homicides in just the past year – this reversal comes at a time when cities and counties across our nation continue to see heightened levels of violent crime. I want to recognize our wonderful partners, our city police departments, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, and our State Attorney for making this life-saving work possible. And thank you to

Commissioner Joe Martinez for always advocating for our police officers and public safety.

United, we tackled violence and saved lives.

Unidos, enfrentamos la violencia y salvamos vidas.

Ansanm, nou te atake vyolans e nou te sove lavi moun.

I truly am so proud of all we achieved together — as a community of collaborators and innovators, and as a 28,000 person-strong County workforce that has never wavered in times of enormous difficulty. Thank you County family, as well, for embracing my “No Wrong Door” approach to county services and my effort to effectively engage our residents and businesses as partners in our work.

As Collaborator in Chief, I launched an ambitious, community-wide campaign, Thrive305, to make sure your voices drive our County’s priorities. Months of direct public input from tens of thousands of residents — heard through a direct survey as well as in-person and virtual conversations — led to an Action Plan with 12 key priorities.

The Action Plan is a living, breathing roadmap now built into each department’s 2022 plans and budget. In fact, most of the actions are already underway!

I want to thank every single person who participated in Thrive305, and all the people who have made your voices heard and worked with us this past year. Thanks to you, Miami-Dade County has laid the groundwork for a thriving and prosperous future, and we are ready.

## **PART II: ECONOMY // QUALITY OF LIFE**

Everywhere you look, you can see all the signs of a community on the rebound. In the last year alone, Miami International Airport more than doubled its passenger traffic -- ending 2021 at 37 million passengers compared to just 18 million the prior year.

At the Seaport, we've just wrapped up the busiest year of cargo activity in the port's history.

We can also see enormous growth in the industries of the future, with major tech and finance firms relocating here.

A dynamic, growing metropolis demands a reliable, agile transit system that connects all corners of our community, from North Dade to Sweetwater, from Florida City to Miami Beach. When we expand mobility, we connect residents with opportunities outside their neighborhoods. When we keep Miami-Dade moving, we create more livable neighborhoods that attract residents and businesses.

Good news! The SMART transit plan is the roadmap connecting all parts of our County, and we are already building the corridors to get us there!

Last year, our County broke ground on the South Dade Transitway, our first major corridor. Bus Rapid Transit, using trainlike buses, will make it possible to travel from Homestead to Downtown Miami in 60 minutes or less, opening new opportunities to hundreds of thousands of South Miami-Dade residents.

That's why I've been working so hard over the last several months to make sure our federal partners know Miami-Dade is ready to accelerate progress on the entire SMART Program – to get our fair share of funding to build the mobility network our County needs and deserves. Commissioner Eileen Higgins, who serves as the Transportation Chair on the Commission, has been a steadfast partner to ensure we secure funding and stay focused on delivering our promise for mass transit.

We are re-imagining transportation and seizing the future.

Through Vice-Chairman Gilbert's leadership, we have created a first-ever Air Mobility Working Group to chart a path forward in this innovative industry.

We've also enhanced mobility with new funding for The Underline and Ludlam Trail, to provide more than 16 miles of dedicated space to run, jog, walk, or bike! Even our furry, four-legged friends will enjoy these trails. I want to thank the 9,500 Miami-Dade families who chose to adopt and not shop. That includes my husband, Rob, who recently welcomed two beautiful grown up cats, Milly and Pilly, into our lives.

And I want to give a special shout-out to Commissioner Souto, who has always made sure our county parks are a top priority so that all Miami-Dade residents can enjoy beautiful outdoor spaces.

### **Econ Development: Workforce + Tech**

I know that Miami-Dade will thrive when all residents are treated with respect and given opportunities to prosper and succeed.

That's the County I've been working to build since I was elected.

We are making historic investments in Miami-Dade's workforce and small businesses to make sure our residents are positioned to succeed in the fastest growing industries.

From tech, to healthcare, to construction, agriculture, and more, we are building bridges for the future between industry leaders and the people who power our economy.

As County Mayor I am committed to partnering with our schools, universities, key industries, and the public sector to make sure residents graduate and can enter into the highest-growth careers, and companies have the local talent they need to build for the future.

That's why I am so proud that we created a new Miami-Dade Tech and Innovation team, bringing together a rockstar line-up of advisors from Florida International University, Miami Dade College, and the University of Miami who are focused on talent

pipeline development. We're creating new incentives and partnering with the biggest equity funds to make sure they are investing right here in Miami-Dade. Just yesterday I had an exciting conversation with Dr. Doltres, our new Superintendent, to start planning for our joint efforts for student success and career pipelines.

And we are tech ready!

Innovation isn't just about the private sector – it's also how we make **government** work better for the people we serve. My administration is proud to work alongside Commissioner Danielle Cohen Higgins, as she brings together industry leaders to strengthen our existing tech infrastructure and attract new opportunities.

Commissioner Cohen Higgins and Commissioner Kionne McGhee represent South Dade, the fastest growing region in our county. I commend Commissioner McGhee for his lifelong passion to serve South Dade. I am committed to continue partnering to bring to life an economic agenda that delivers on my vision for area residents and businesses.

Across departments, we are seeking new approaches to make government more efficient, cut red tape, and offer streamlined services to help new and growing businesses more easily navigate County hall.

We also must continue closing the digital divide.

To do so, we've teamed up with the Knight Foundation and the City of Miami to invest \$12 million in new tech training programs at Miami Dade College. And through our Accelerate Miami-Dade Program, we're expanding access to digital skills and creating pathways to tech jobs in underserved communities: with Microsoft, Miami-Dade College, the Beacon Council, The Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, The Miami-Dade Chamber of Commerce, and United Way. In 2021 we officially launched this program in Little Haiti, and over the next three years, we will expand it countywide.

In fact, this year, a team of County employees will begin going door-to-door to help **every** household connect to broadband. We will partner with national incubators to create dedicated space for green tech companies. And we are also supporting local entrepreneurs through a new county-funded Executive Leadership Program in conjunction with the Greater Miami Chamber.

### **Small Business + Equity**

Most of us know that in Miami-Dade County, small businesses are the engine that make our economy go. Lifting up all locally-owned small businesses is how we will build a recovery that leaves no family behind.

Through the incredible work of the new Office of Equity and Inclusion, more small and diverse businesses are now able to compete for county contracts.

We launched Strive305 to support budding entrepreneurs by providing access to capital, training, retail and office space, mentoring, and more.

Somos una economía de pequeños negocios y estamos haciendo todo lo posible para apoyarlos.

Over 1,500 small business owners participated in our BizHack classes and the Morning Huddle, online programs that connect them to valuable resources, training, and coaching.

Kemyana Jones Bey and Anne Johnson Bey — the founders of Perfect Salon Suites, a shared retail space for beauty entrepreneurs — are just one Strive305 success story.

I was delighted to join their grand opening at Mall of the Americas last year. They are now preparing to open another set of suites at the Miami International Mall.

We also are moving ahead to complete a study on disparities in procurement to help us level the playing-field for minority-owned businesses.

This year, in collaboration with Commissioner Jean Monestime's office, we will launch a \$1 million BizUP program for grants of up to \$50,000 in a Shark Tank inspired pitch challenge.

The more than 28,000 employees that comprise the Miami-Dade County workforce are doing the hard work of implementing these initiatives. The challenges they have overcome in helping our



community navigate these times have been immense. A core principle of my administration is to take time to recognize our employees for their service and commitment.

We reached landmark agreements with all 10 County unions and with Eulen America, one of the largest contractors at Miami International Airport. Our agreement with Eulen will enhance both health and safety standards to create a safe, positive working environment for all employees – the standards we expect from all companies seeking to do business with our County.

## **Housing and Affordability**

As we continue to grow and build for the future, it's critical that we make sure people who call Miami-Dade County home can afford to live here.

This means tackling the growing housing crisis head-on. That's why we have already taken action to put Miami-Dade on a pathway to affordability. We invested a record \$260 million towards the expansion of housing that **you** can afford.

By the end of this year, we will have an estimated 14,000 units of affordable and workforce housing in development.

And while developing more affordable units is critical, even more measures are needed as housing costs continue to rise.

We are expanding our community's incentive program for landlords, offering them financing to cover necessary renovation

costs in exchange for keeping rents within reach. Our new Housing Advocacy Division will drive these efforts.

I think many of you know that we also took swift action to protect Miami-Dade households against the potential wave of evictions generated by the pandemic.

Last year, we distributed more than \$80 million in Emergency Rental Assistance, which prevented the eviction of over 8,000 vulnerable families and ensured landlords could pay their bills.

By October, we had officially spent 100% of our funds, compared to a national average of 30% and a statewide average of just 4%.

The speed and urgency of our operation helped residents like Elaine Alexandra Vega, at the height of the pandemic, who was 9 months pregnant and facing eviction after losing her job as an administrative assistant. Today, Elaine is living in that same unit with her baby and looking to re-enter the workforce.

I was proud to be one of the first Mayors to join “House America”, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development program to build housing for the homeless. With the stewardship of the Homeless Trust, we set aggressive goals to create new units. Unlike other communities around the nation, homelessness in our County is now at record lows.

## **Environment**

In Miami-Dade, we know that our environment is central to our health and our economy. Clean water is vital for our future.

We are also ground zero for sea level rise and climate change, so we have a unique role to play in leading the way for coastal communities in the U.S. and around the world.

My Administration has welcomed the focus and partnership of Commissioner Raquel Regalado who shares my commitment to make our environment and infrastructure future ready.

We broke ground on phase one of “Connect to Protect,” our septic to sewer conversion plan, in the coastal area of Little River – a low-lying area prone to flooding, where septic tanks fail during heavy rain, and high tides result in sewage spills. We are working hard to draw down federal dollars that will fast-track many more vulnerable properties.

We announced our commitment with six leading cruise lines to bring shore power to PortMiami by 2023 – which will make us the first port in the Southeastern U.S. to hook-up shore power, cutting pollution and carbon emissions.

We released a Sea Level Rise strategy – the first of its kind in the nation, a tailored strategy to help our unique subtropical paradise adapt to rising seas – and our groundbreaking Climate Action Strategy. These are comprehensive plans to drive us forward to our goal of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. We will track and enhance energy efficiency in County buildings, reduce fuel consumption, convert our waste into energy, and invest in the

green economy. Next year, we'll also see dividends from our county's first major solar rooftop initiative, which will provide 1.5 megawatts of energy from the sun to directly power County facilities.

We appointed Miami-Dade's first Chief Bay Officer and the first in the world Chief Heat Officer — to lead efforts to protect the Bay and prepare for the intensifying threat of extreme heat, now the #1 cause of weather-related deaths in the U.S.

And with the support of the County Commission, we passed a law to reduce nutrient pollution harming Biscayne Bay, which has led to seagrass die-offs, algae blooms and more.

This year we're working to build on the initial success of the county's critical fertilizer ordinance, with a community-wide education and outreach effort, partnering with cities and private retail to educate homeowners that the time to fertilize is now, not during the rainy season from May to October.

I want to thank County Commissioner Rebecca Sosa, who has fought for years to preserve and restore Biscayne Bay. Much of our recent progress in safeguarding our Bay would not have been possible without her dedication.

### **PART III: FORWARD-LOOKING MESSAGE // CONCLUSION**

#### **CONCLUSION:**

To our 5 County Commissioners who will be leaving office after 2022, thank you for the decades of service you have given to our County. Chairman Diaz, Commissioners Heyman, Monestime, Sosa and Souto, your work and legacy will endure for decades to come. Each of you has brought unique talents and valuable contributions to shape our Miami-Dade story.

I am grateful to our 34 city Mayors who embraced our enhanced collaboration as we work together to better shape our shared future.

I'm also so thankful for partnerships with our many business and community leaders who faced each new challenge with creativity and commitment.

It's truly because of all the ways we united in 2021 that we enter 2022 as stronger, safer and more stable.

When I took office in 2020, I knew that I was taking on the greatest challenge and privilege of my career: to serve the people of the very best community in the nation, and to work with you each and every day to make Miami-Dade even greater.

I've been a public servant for over half a century, but this is the true pinnacle of my career. This is not just a job for me. It is a calling.

I want you to know just how proud I am to be your Mayor, and that I will always honor and listen to those I serve. I hear your voices. I read your letters, your emails, your social media posts - and not just the nice ones.

I take all of your feedback – positive and not so positive — very seriously.

And yes, we have come a long way — together — but I also know we still have much work to do.

I often stay up late thinking about the state of this county: how we can level the playing field — how to be a community that truly serves and works for everyone. A community where all of us — not just a select few — can truly thrive and shine.

But I'm not just THINKING about it.

Hopefully you all know by now that I am a Mayor who rolls up my sleeves and gets to work, working right by your side.

Today, I stand before you to renew my commitment and my promise to you, as your Mayor — as your Collaborator in Chief — to face each day with care and compassion.

Mi compromiso es trabajar hacia soluciones reales que creen una mejor calidad de vida para todos.

Angajman pa mwen, se travay pou yon solisyon reyèl ki ap kreye yon pi bon kalite lavi pou nou tout.

We all want a safer, more prosperous Miami-Dade, more good-paying jobs, more housing that is affordable, more mobility — in our economy and on our roads and transit corridors — and a resilient environment now and for all the generations to come. We want a better and even brighter future. And I can assure you we are well on our way. Together, we are building a better Miami-Dade now and for the future. I am hopeful and grateful to you all.

Thank you for doing this work with me, side by side. Gracias. Mèsi.

May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless Miami-Dade County.