

Crestview City Council Expands Sex Offender Residency Restrictions Based on Inaccurate Information

Florida Action Committee (FAC) is Correcting the Facts

BONYTON BEACH, FL, UNITED STATES, November 3, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Despite calls from the [Florida Action Committee](#) to correct the record, Crestview City Councilmembers have approved an ordinance based on distorted statistics and false information.

Persons required to register as sexual offenders in Crestview, Florida now have fewer places to legally reside within the city limits. During a meeting on September 25, 2023, the Crestview City Council passed a resolution expanding its sex offender residency restrictions. The city, located in Okaloosa County in the Florida panhandle, has made it illegal for persons required to register as sex offenders to live within 1,500 feet of schools. The ordinance also prohibits persons required to register from living near other places where children gather, such as parks, playgrounds, and bus stops.

The revised ordinance increases by 500 feet the state law that already exists which makes it a crime for persons required to register as sex offenders from establishing a residence within 1,000 feet of a school. However, the state law only applies to people with offenses that occurred after October 1, 2004, the date when the state law went into effect. The Crestview ordinance applies retroactively and restricts where a person required to register can live, even if their offense took place years or decades before the ordinance was originally passed.

According to Gail Colletta, President of the Florida Action Committee (FAC), this will increase the amount of homelessness in the city while completely failing to protect the public. "Restricting where persons required to register can live does nothing to protect children or the public," Colletta said. This is because residency restrictions only affect where persons required to register can be from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m., times when schools and playgrounds are closed, and almost all children are at home.

"Even worse, the Crestview City Council based its decision to pass this ordinance on myths and misinformation instead of facts and evidence. One of the members of the Crestview City Council inaccurately stated that 67% of 'these people' will be arrested again, implying that the arrest will be for a sexual offense. In fact, the study that the councilmember was referring to actually showed that only 7.7% of the people tracked committed another sexual offense within 9 years of

being released,” Colletta pointed out. “As a result, the Crestview City Council has taken away a fundamental right of its citizens based on false data and inaccurate statistics,” Colletta added.

The Florida Action Committee formally notified the Crestview City Council of the inaccurate data and requested a public correction on or before the next City Council meeting on October 23, 2023. FAC then requested that the ordinance, which had been approved based on inaccurate information, be repealed and that a new vote be taken based on the corrected record. However, despite multiple requests from the FAC, the Crestview City Council failed to make any changes to the ordinance, allowing it to stand based on inaccurate and false information.

The study that was misquoted by the councilman, was released by the [United States Department of Justice](#) and concludes that such restrictions create barriers to a former offender’s stability and successful reentry to society. The study by the federal government which the Crestview City councilman referred to actually showed that that 92.3% of people released in 2005 for rape or sexual assault did not commit a new sexual offense during the study’s follow-up period. According to Colletta, homelessness in Florida is being driven by ordinances passed by cities and counties that effectively banish former offenders from most residential areas. Colletta has urged the Florida Legislature to intervene by repealing local ordinances and enforcing the state law uniformly in all cities and counties throughout the state.

Florida Action Committee (FAC), founded in 2006, is a state-wide consortium of concerned citizens and professionals whose purpose is to promote the prevention of sexual abuse while preserving the safety and dignity of all citizens through evidence-based laws.

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