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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

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JACKSONVILLE CITY COUNCIL MEMBER REGGIE GAFFNEY JR. OPPOSES CURRENT LOCAL PANHANDLING BILL FOR THE SECOND TIME

(JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA, February 12, 2023) – Recently circulated through Jacksonville City Council committee meetings, on its way to the full City Council for vote on February 14th, is ordinance 2022-574. A bill which Council Member Reggie Gaffney Jr., strongly opposes.

I believe we should all work towards constructive solutions for housing, not handcuffs. Although I support the safety of all, I have concerns about upgraded charges, an increase in incarcerations, unwanted arrests, and deaths – which, for many families, especially in the black communities, is an everyday concern.

The bill reads in part: “Penalties for violations include: a civil penalty of up to \$100; an educational notice from the Sheriff’s Office; for the second violation, the offender will also be given an official warning and may be trespassed; third violation, a civil citation may be issued; for fourth violation, the offender may be arrested or given a notice to appear, as applicable, with a maximum of 10 days penalty if the violator is arrested and convicted; each incident occurring more than every twenty (20) minutes after the violation has been corrected shall constitute a separate violation.”

How can we adequately track any person who has mental health conditions, no place to live and does not have identification? How can we continue to afford to invest our resources in ways that do not address the root cause of what we as a city are really facing?

Regular, everyday people who lost their jobs, unable to make ends meet for their basic needs due to failing wages and rising rent, mortgage, and utilities, are becoming homeless or at risk of homelessness. And unfortunately, I believe this ordinance targets them too.

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