

The 39th Session of the Student Body Senate

Florida International University

Miami, Florida

S.R. 03 011

Panthers with Disabilities Act

IN THE SENATE

November 7, 2022

SIPA Senator Kaily LaChapelle, Housing Senator Mia Rodriguez, Business Senator Matthew Gaynor, Graduate Senator Haley Dawson, introduced the following resolution, which was presented on the Senate floor

A RESOLUTION

To advocate, support, and draw attention to students with disabilities, as well as increase resource allocation to the Disability Resource Center.

Be it enacted by the Senate of the Student Body at Florida International University assembled,



Kaily LaChapelle



Mia Rodriguez



Matthew Gaynor



Haley Dawson

Whereas, Florida International University is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) of 1990, Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, in addition to other state, local, and university policies^[1],

Whereas, the ADA ensures equal access to education and employment opportunities, along with protection from discrimination and access to accommodations^[2],

Whereas, the Disability Resource Center (DRC) serves over 3,500 students at the University^[3],

Whereas, According to “FIU 2021 Health and Wellness Survey Overview” that received 10,589 FIU student responses, 43 percent are not familiar at all with health and wellness services offered by FIU^[4],

Whereas, the Disability Resource Center is vastly underfunded and understaffed, and working on a \$661,888 Health Fee budget allocation for this year, which is funded by the health fee and is not managed by the joint governance committee (reference Figure 1) ^[5] ,

Whereas, the Disability Resource Center got a \$30,000 budget cut from E&G (Education and General) funding this year,

Whereas, through the Pride Center’s Disabled & Queer and last year’s People’s Forum on Disabilities, dozens of students have expressed concerns pertaining to the DRC and call upon student leaders/administration to support the DRC and students with disabilities,

Whereas, there is a plan in motion to hold a DRC People’s Forum Event with collaboration from the ADA and Accessibility Coordinator, where all students with disabilities are welcome and encouraged to attend,

Whereas, the transportation services for students with mobility impairments only run through business hours which limit and alienate these students from evening/weekend events and activities,

Whereas, the infrastructure to support students with mobility impairments on this campus creates barriers and high concerns,

Whereas, a study conducted in the University of Kansas focused on emphasizing how accommodation processes hone in on disabilities instead of addressing students’ contextual and functional needs where at least than 25% of the participants rated services such as mental health counseling as ineffective, ^[6]

Whereas, mental health accommodations for the sake of improving performance in the classroom, daily life in and out of campus, and any other areas of life that can encounter strife sans these adjustments for students’ well-being should be taken seriously as well as support, accommodations, and awareness are important for a student to excel on this campus,

Whereas, the accommodations provided by the DRC both encompass physical and mental health including any impairments, and should hold the same weight when recognizing their importance for students' needs,

Whereas, "ARM" (Assessable Remote Module) is a newly designed software built for the DRC,

- a. In the beginning of 2020, the DRC contracted a private company to design this software and it has been completed for months,
- b. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the University prioritized the creation and implementation of the P3 app, and ARM was lowered on the priority list; now that P3 is no longer a top concern for the University, ARM should take precedence
- c. The "ARM" software is designed to make accommodations easier through technology and will be linked the main FIU database,
- d. "ARM" is designed to better support students when it comes to the DRC protocols,
 - a. Students must request accommodations and initiate the paperwork themselves,
 - b. Each semester, students must opt-in to accommodations (even if they received them a previous semester), and submit testing accommodations for each enrolled class,
 - c. The "ARM" software will keep track of all this and eliminate the burden this process currently places on students,

Whereas, FIU Embrace Center for Advancing Inclusive Communities is an initiative that empowers disabled individuals and expands the University's vision on diversity, equity and inclusion,

Whereas, On October 24th, 2018, FIU Embrace in collaboration with StartUP FIU hosted a Design Thinking Session established by the Provost, where students, faculty, staff, department administration, and community members came together to develop a clear understanding of some of the challenges our Panther community with disabilities face; and this was the summarized report (which was provided from FIU Embrace)

A. "Accessibility Categories"

a. Campus Infrastructure

- a. Create a centralized reporting structure and ensure cross systems collaboration; determine reporting structure,
- b. Evacuation protocols need to be revised and disseminated to all students (with and without disabilities),

b. Advocacy

- a. Identify/launch a collaborative group with representation from key departments, programs and individuals impacted by a disability on campus. This group should meet consistently throughout the academic year to work on tasks that promotes and supports greater inclusion and accessibility,
- b. The group should be accessible to students to share their concerns and feedback,
- c. Develop and launch an awareness campaign to educate the University community about issues that impact our colleagues with a disability,

c. FIU Mobile Map App

- a. Make websites and apps accessible to all,

- b. Disseminate educational materials to the FIU community,
- d. FIU Transportation**
 - a. Increase the number of inclusive Panther Movers to accommodate walkers and wheelchairs,
 - b. Provide education to all Panther Mover drivers around topics of disability and accessibility,
- B. Identified Areas for Innovation**
 - a. Crosswalks**
 - i. Enhance street crossing safety for the visually impaired by utilizing audio for each crosswalk,
 - ii. Provide a hack-a-thon to find technological solutions,
 - b. Elevators & Parking reporting**
 - i. Create an effective and efficient reporting system,
 - ii. Create a culture of responsibility, if a person without disabilities finds an elevator that doesn't work, they should know the reporting process,
 - c. App**
 - i. Building an app that will help a user in real time with navigating their mobility and resource needs on campus,
 - ii. An app that works offline when there is no signal,
 - iii. An app that helps users report issues and request accommodations in real time",

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Senate of the Student Body strongly urges that first and foremost the Division of Information Technology prioritizes the completion of the new technological software called "ARM" (Assessable Remote Module) that is designated for the DRC and students with disabilities,

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Senate of the Student Body calls upon the University to increase funding in E&G allocation directed to the DRC in the next fiscal year,

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Senate of the Student Body encourages the mandate of cultural competency training on campus for all faculty/staff,

- a. The DRC holds workshops and at any point a faculty, class, or organization can request one,
- b. Each department should hold their faculty accountable to at least completing one workshop,

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Senate of the Student calls upon the University to invest in better transportation and infrastructure services for students with mobility impairments,

- a. Transportation services for students with mobility impairments should run longer than just the business hours and be assessable for events/weekends,
- b. Infrastructure pertains to including up-to-date and assessable elevators, ramps, and disabled push buttons

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Senate of the Student Body encourages the University to listen fully to the policy recommendations above from the FIU Embrace Design Thinking initiative from 2018,

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Senate of the Student Body calls upon the University Administration to include the disabled community and the DRC in future Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives on campus,

- a. Further encourages the creation of an advisory committee that will further expand on this resolution, and advise the Executive Administration and Board of Trustees on future DEI plans pertaining to disabilities and accommodations,
- b. The committee will be led by the ADA and Accessibility Coordinator, and include representation from the DRC administration, along with faculty and students with disabilities, and it will be open to the larger community of FIU,
- c. This committee will collaborate with FIU Embrace and StartUP, and act as a follow up action from the initiative in 2018 that was supported by the previous Provost,
- d. This committee will meet once a month and be tasked with following up on actions, policies, and initiatives happening on campus related to disabilities and accommodations.

[1] Florida International University - Digital Communications. "Ada and Accessibility." *Division of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion* | Florida International University, <https://dei.fiu.edu/civil-rights-and-accessibility/ada-and-accessibility/>.

[2] Florida International University - Digital Communications. "Ada and Accessibility." *Division of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion* | Florida International University, <https://dei.fiu.edu/civil-rights-and-accessibility/ada-and-accessibility/>.

[3] Florida International University - Digital Communications. "Disability Resource Center." *Division of Academic & Student Affairs* | Florida International University, <https://dasa.fiu.edu/all-departments/disability-resource-center/>.

[4] Florida International University - Digital Communications. "Reports." *Division of Academic & Student Affairs* | Florida International University, <https://dasa.fiu.edu/student-support/wellness/reports/index.html>.

[5] Florida International University - Digital Communications. "Reports." *Division of Academic & Student Affairs* | Florida International University, <https://dasa.fiu.edu/student-support/wellness/reports/index.html>.

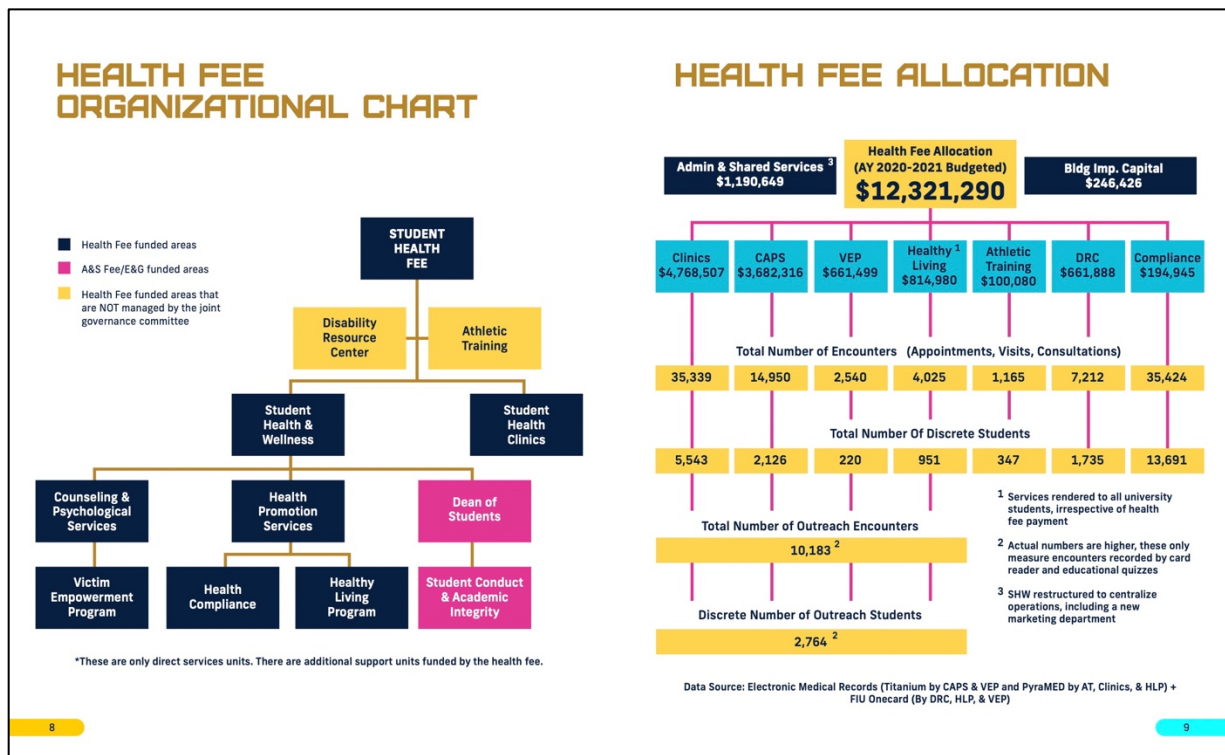
[6] Kurth, Noelle, and Daryl Mellard. "Student Perceptions of the Accommodation Process in Postsecondary ... - Ed." *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, ERIC, 2006, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ844625.pdf>.

References:

Florida International University - Digital Communications. "Ada and Accessibility." *Division of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion | Florida International University*, <https://dei.fiu.edu/civil-rights-and-accessibility/ada-and-accessibility/>.

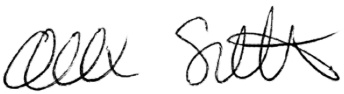

Florida International University - Digital Communications. "Reports." *Division of Academic & Student Affairs | Florida International University*, <https://dasa.fiu.edu/student-support/wellness/reports/index.html>.

Figure 1:



Senate Resolution Transmission Form

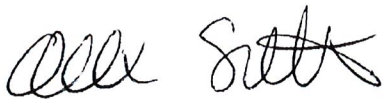
This resolution is presented by the Senate of the Student Body at Florida International University. It is presented by the Senate President Pro-Tempore and affixed with the signature of the Senate President. Both the Senate President and the Senate President Pro-Tempore affirm that the information presented below is accurate and that the resolution has successfully passed in the Senate of the Student Body. The resolution is presented on this day and at this hour for signature or veto.

<i>SR 03 011</i>			
Date Introduced:	<i>11/07/2022</i>		
Committees Assigned:	(1) Rules and Administration (2) Health and Well-being		
Vote in Committee 1: <i>11/02/2022</i>	5 <i>For</i>	0 <i>Against</i>	0 <i>Abstaining</i>
Vote in Committee 2: <i>11/02/2022</i>	6 <i>For</i>	0 <i>Against</i>	1 <i>Abstaining</i>
Vote on the Senate Floor: <i>11/21/2022</i>	29 <i>For</i>	1 <i>Against</i>	0 <i>Abstaining</i>
			
Signature of the Senate President		Signature of the Senate President Pro Tempore	

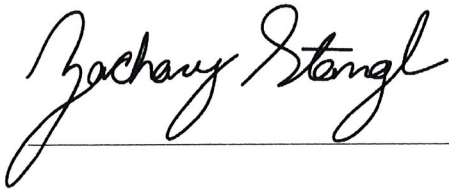
Presidential Signature of a Senate Resolution

On this day, at this time, and in this place, the Senate of the Student Body at Florida International University does hereby present this resolution to the desk of the President of the Student Body for signature or veto. The Senate has passed this resolution and all its accompaniments, in accordance with the Constitution and Statutes of the Student Government Association at Florida International University. It is presented in good faith, whereas the officers of the Senate have affixed their signatures to affirm that the resolution has followed due procedure and is valid. The Senate will await your decision.

SR 03 011



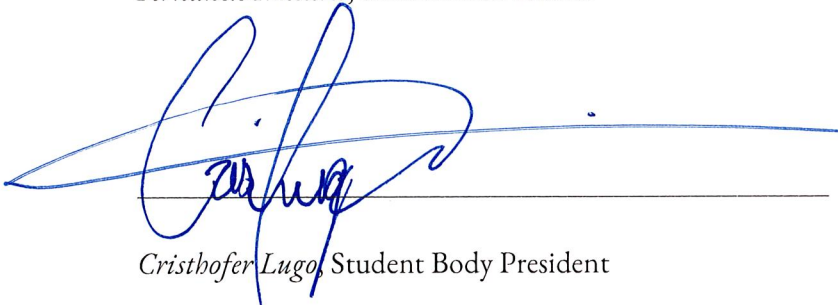
Alexander P. Sutton, Senate President



Zachary Stangl, Senate President Pro-Tempore



Fernando Melara, Senate Floor Leader



Cristhofer Lugo, Student Body President



Approved

Vetoed