

December 19, 2024

The Honorable Regina Romero
Mayor
City of Tucson
255 W. Alameda Street
Tucson, AZ 85701

Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers,

The undersigned below are writing to urge you to implement a straightforward and simple tool to create safer conditions for pedestrians and motorists, and address increases in panhandling within Tucson City Limits.

In Tucson the concern about pedestrian safety has only grown, as a study earlier this spring showed Tucson as the third deadliest metro in America for pedestrians; almost 70% of Tucson's pedestrian deaths in the last decade, have happened in just the last 5 years. This year alone, there are 32 pedestrian fatalities and counting.

In 2023, Pima County began implementing signage at key intersections in unincorporated Pima County, encouraging motorists to "say no to panhandling, say yes to helping agencies serving those in need."

This messaging campaign not only doesn't run afoul of protected free speech, but the results have also been positive on many fronts. While quantitative data is still being collected, qualitative experiences have shown that not only is excessive panhandling in medians less now than it was nearly two years ago, but the County is receiving less calls and complaints with this issue.

We understand that City Attorney Rankin has highlighted in the past City laws that relate to aggressive solicitation in particular, but we also want to highlight City Code Sec. 20-500 that speaks to compelling safety concerns:

"Mayor and council find that the practice of pedestrians soliciting or otherwise engaging occupants of vehicles at intersections for donations, services or sales increases the danger of physical injury to both the pedestrian and the occupants of vehicles, interrupts traffic flow and increases traffic delays. Medians serve as safety islands to those pedestrians who are crossing the street. Medians also promote the safety of occupants of motor vehicles by serving as an unoccupied buffer between opposing lanes of traffic. Pedestrian and motor vehicle safety is jeopardized when the curbcut, crosswalk and median areas are blocked or impeded by persons engaging in solicitation or sales. Further, persons on medians and roadways who interact with motorists distract and disrupt vehicular traffic and create a safety risk. The city's interest in protecting the welfare of pedestrians and occupants of motor vehicles is compelling."

This sentiment was also on the mind of the Pima County Board of Supervisors when they addressed this issue in 2023. Supervisor Scott at the time shared with media: "In terms of not wanting a human presence on those medians...There's a concern for their safety, but also for motorists and pedestrians...I think the expectation is that we are not trying to portray

homelessness in and of itself as a crime. We're not trying to deter people who may want to reach out to those in our community who need a helping a hand." Indeed, Pima County co-promoted at the same time a link of community services that residents can contribute to support those in need.

We ask the Tucson City Council to view the County's efforts as a successful pilot and to take this small step that is making a big difference on this issue.

We look forward to hearing back from you, and sharing with our members your response.

In service together,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael S. Guymon".

Michael S. Guymon
President & CEO
Tucson Metro Chamber



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Trish Muir".

Trish Muir
Chair
Pima Area Labor Federation, AFL-CIO



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh Jacobsen".

Josh Jacobsen
Steering Committee
Tucson Crime Free Coalition



Southern Arizona Leadership Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ted Maxwell".

Ted Maxwell
President/CEO
Southern Arizona Leadership Council



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shawn Cote".

Shawn Cote
Government Affairs Director
Tucson Association of Realtors



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Parisi".

Paul Parisi
Arizona Grassroots Director
Our America

CC:

The Honorable Kevin Dahl, Vice-Mayor
The Honorable Lane Santa Cruz, Ward I
The Honorable Paul Cunningham, Ward II
The Honorable Nikki Lee, Ward IV
The Honorable Richard Fimbres, Ward V
The Honorable Karin Uhlich, Ward VI
Mr. Tim Thomure, City Manager
Mr. Mike Rankin, City Attorney