

Florida county's "self-certified child safety zones" condemned by NARSOL and Horowitz

written by admin | July 20, 2022



By [Lenore Skenazy](#). . . In 2020, an ordinance in Brevard County, Florida, permitted a business to certify itself as a place where children congregate—the moral equivalent of a park—thereby making it [a crime](#) for anyone on the sex offense registry to venture inside, or loiter nearby. The idea, apparently, was to make kids even safer from danger.

But, “proximity” laws prohibiting sex offenders from public places like playgrounds have not been shown to make kids any safer, says Emily Horowitz, a sociologist who researches sex offense law and policy.

At the same time, under this law, people on the registry have no way of knowing which businesses have self-certified themselves as child-gathering places. That means registrants

don't know which establishments they are barred from entering, or even going near. But if they get too close, they are violating their registration requirements, which could land them in prison.

"Protecting children from harm is a goal shared by all, but this law does nothing to advance that goal," says Sandy Rozek, communications director for the National Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws. "It is a 'feel-good' law, not a 'do-good' law."

Even before the self-certification law, Brevard registrants were required to stay at least 1,000 feet away from parks, playgrounds, schools, and daycare centers. But since the self-certification provision took effect, registrants have felt compelled to bring the matter before county commissioners and explain how it hampers their ability to live in society.

Merely attending a meeting of the county commissioners is impossible, however, as Brevard's Government Center is less than 1,000 feet from a high school, making it a crime for anyone on the registry to enter the building.

Two years ago, when the self-certifying ordinance was first proposed, friends and family members of registrants spoke on their behalf at a public meeting, asking the commission not to pass it.

Only Bryan Lober, the commission chair, voted against the law. As he noted at the time, "It's a little troubling that we can't have folks here who this is going to directly impact."

[Read the remainder of Lenore's article here at Reason.](#)