


MEMORANDUM

October 15, 2015

TO: The Honorable Chair and Members of The School Board of Miami-Dade County,
Florida

FROM: Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools 

SUBJECT: FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

LINE-UP CHANGES

Last week, Speaker of the House, John Boehner, announced that he would be resigning at the end of October 2015, from his position as Speaker of US House of Representatives and as a member of Congress. This announcement comes in the midst of a leadership struggle not seen for a century. The last time a sitting speaker was challenged by his own party was in 1910. This coupled with House Education Committee Chairman, John Kline's, announcement that he will retire after this term, urgently prompted questions on the reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education, announced Friday that he would step down in December, marking the departure of one of the longest-serving members of President Obama's cabinet. The President announced that John B. King Jr., the Deputy Education Secretary and a former commissioner of education in New York State, will lead the US Department of Education.

Additionally the US House of Representatives and the US Senate passed a Continuing Budget Resolution avoiding a government shutdown which maintains current levels of funding until December 11, 2015. The passage of the Continuing Resolution only delays a budgetary showdown on FY 2016.

On September 29 and September 30, 2015, Florida School Boards Association (FSBA) held an advocacy trip to Washington, D.C. As part of this advocacy, members of Congress and federal offices were visited to discuss budgetary needs, as well as concerns and recommendations on the ESEA reauthorization. Visits included all of the following:

- The White House Domestic Policy Council's Senior Policy Advisor for Education, Mr. Mario Cardona;
- Members of the United States Department of Education's National Engagement Team;
- Congressman Carlos Curbelo;
- Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart;
- Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen;
- Congresswoman Frederica Wilson;

- Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman-Schultz's Education Policy Advisor, Mr. Seth Extein; and
- Senator Marco Rubio's Legislative Correspondent, Mr. Eduardo Sacasa.

Discussions with the members of Congress, staff and federal employees, seemed to draw widespread support for the following legislative priorities of the Florida School Boards Association, as well as Miami-Dade County Public School's (M-DCPS):

ESEA REAUTHORIZATION

- Oppose voucher portability provisions which would allow states to allocate Title I funding without regard to concentrated poverty;
- Oppose arbitrary annual spending caps on district class size expenditures;
- Oppose the elimination of "maintenance of effort" rule that prevents states from cutting more than 10% of their education budget and replacing state cuts with federal funding;
- Oppose language which would allow parents to opt-out of standardized testing creating burdens on school districts in meeting required student participation rates; and
- Exclude English Language Learner's from proficiency in the calculation of school grades until at least two years of instruction.

BUDGET

- Spare education funding from budget cuts as a result of sequestration;
- Oppose block grants that would fold together federal entitlement grants made to school districts through state agencies such as Title I and Title III;
- Increase funding for Individuals with Disabilities Act, which is at its lowest level since 2007 as this population of students has increased;
- Increase Title I funding; and
- Eliminate imposing sequestration on education funding.

SCHOOL FOOD AND NUTRITION

- Greater flexibility on food and nutrition spending for school districts to be able to capitalize on fresher local options that fit appropriate student nutrition requirements.

If you have any questions or need additional information please contact Ms. Iraida R. Mendez-Cartaya, Associate Superintendent, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Grants Administration, and Community Engagement, at 305 995-1497.

AMC:lbd
M328

cc: School Board Attorney
Superintendent's Cabinet