


MEMORANDUM

February 24, 2017

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

FROM: Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools 

**SUBJECT: 2017 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE – INTERIM COMMITTEE WEEK
FEBRUARY 13-17, 2017**

The Florida Legislature met the week of February 13, 2017, for its fifth week of interim committees leading up to the 2017 Legislative Session.

Committee Highlights

The **Senate Education Appropriations Subcommittee** heard presentations from several principals of low-performing schools that had increased student performance and sustained such increases over time. The panel included principals from Hillsborough, Duval, Polk, Miami-Dade, Highlands, Osceola, and Leon counties. Representing Miami-Dade was Mr. Carlos Rios, Jr., from Miami Jackson Senior High School. The principals discussed the both challenges and rewards of working to improve these schools.

Chairman David Simmons announced his major funding priorities based on discussions with committee members. These priorities include:

- VPK Base Student Allocation Increase;
- Modified Extra Hour Initiative;
- Modified Best and Brightest Program;
- Restoration of the Discretionary Capital Outlay Millage 2 mills; and
- Gardiner Scholarships.

The **House Education Committee** requested select districts to present on turn-around schools with a focus on the process and strategies used to address the needs of low-performing schools. The panel consisted of representatives from Pasco, Polk, and Duval counties.

Bills of Interest

PIEC3, Local Government Ethics Reform sponsored by the House Public Integrity & Ethics Committee, seeks to implement numerous changes to Florida's Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees (6A-10.081) as it relates to local government officers, employees, and lobbyists. Specifically, the bill seeks to create or amend ethics provisions as follows:

- Require elected municipal officers serving municipalities with \$5 million or more in total revenue, and candidates for such offices, to file a full and public disclosure of their financial interests in lieu of the less detailed form of disclosure required under current law;

- Require elected governing board members of a special district to annually complete four hours of ethics training, a requirement that mirrors the current law applicable to constitutional officers and elected municipal officers;
- Strengthen the law on voting conflicts of interest by requiring local officers who must abstain from voting on a measure due to a voting conflict of interest to disclose the conflict prior to participating in the measure;
- Add school districts to the list of governmental entities that may withhold salary-related payments for failure to timely file disclosure of financial interests; and
- Expand the Commission on Ethics' duty to render advisory opinions.

The bill also stipulates that, beginning October 1, 2018, a person would need to register as a lobbyist with the Commission on Ethics prior to lobbying a county, municipality, water management district, school district, hospital district, children's services district, expressway authority, port authority, or independent special district.

The House Committee on Ways & Means discussed **Local Government Fiscal Transparency Concepts**, a proposal that would require local governments, including school districts, to conduct certain debt affordability analyses to ensure debt service does not exceed 7 percent of revenues available to pay such debt. Current law authorizes school districts to issue General Obligation Bonds (GOB) debt, if approved by the county voters, and Certificate of Participation (COP) bonds in which the debt service does not exceed 75 percent of the Local Optional Millage Levy (LOML) property tax revenue. The District currently uses approximately 60 percent of LOML to service the COP debt. This recommended change will impose another debt restriction by requiring districts to limit debt service to 6 percent, and no more than 7 percent in an emergency, of revenues derived from local or state tax sources.

HB 17, sponsored by Representative Randy Fine, relates to Local Regulation Preemption and prohibits counties, cities, school districts, and special districts from adopting or imposing a new regulation, rule license, permit, or requirement – including a regulatory fee, license fee, or permit fee – on a business, profession, or occupation unless the regulation is expressly authorized by general law.

EDC1, sponsored by the House Education Committee, relates to federal funding and urges Congress to remove restrictions on federal Title I funds by providing such funds through a block grant. This is problematic given that the District has historically received less funding when it is block-granted.

SB 962, sponsored by Senator Anitere Flores, relates to assessments. The bill requires that the Florida Department of Education conduct a study of the ACT and SAT to determine their alignment to the Florida State Standards. In addition, the bill proposes shortening the testing window and moving it to the last three weeks of the school year. Representative Manny Diaz has filed an identical bill in the House, **HB 773**.

Upcoming Events

The last week of interim committees is February 20-24, 2017. The 2017 Legislative Session is scheduled to commence on Tuesday, March 7, 2017.

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.

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cc: School Board Attorney
Superintendent's Cabinet