


## MEMORANDUM

November 16, 2017

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

**FROM:** Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools 

**SUBJECT: 2018 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE – INTERIM COMMITTEE WEEK OF NOVEMBER 6-9, 2017**

The Florida Legislature met the week of November 6, 2017, for its third week of interim committees leading up to the 2018 Legislative Session.

### **Hurricane Readiness/Preparedness**

Both the Senate Education Appropriations Subcommittee and the House of Representatives' Select Committee on Hurricane Readiness and Preparedness discussed hurricane issues this past week. Several superintendents and district staff served on panels, including Mr. Rafael Villalobos, Principal of John A. Ferguson Senior High School. The Select Committee will discuss policy recommendations this week, and final recommendations are expected at the December committee meeting.

### **Hope Scholarship**

HB 1 sponsored by Representative Byron Donalds establishes the Hope Scholarship Program (HSP). Beginning with the 2018-2019 school year, the HSP provides the parent of a public school student who has been subjected to an incident at school the opportunity to transfer the student to another public school within the school district, receive a scholarship to transport the student to a public school in another school district, or receive a scholarship for the student to attend a private school. For purposes of the program, an incident includes battery, harassment, hazing, bullying, kidnapping, physical attack, robbery, sexual offense, assault, threat, intimidation, or fighting at school. The term "school" includes any educational program or activity conducted by a public K-12 educational institution, any school-related or school-sponsored program or activity, and riding on a school bus, as defined in s. 1006.25(1), including waiting at a school bus stop.

A student is ineligible for the HSP if the student is enrolled in a specialized public school, such as the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind, the College-Preparatory Boarding Academy, a developmental research school, or a charter school; in a Department of Juvenile Justice commitment program; in a virtual school, correspondence school, or distance learning program that receives state funding due to the student's participation unless the participation is limited to two courses per school year; or receiving any other state sponsored K-12 educational scholarship.

Upon conclusion of the investigation of the incident or within 15 days after receipt of its report, whichever occurs first, the school district must notify the parent of the HSP and offer that parent an opportunity to enroll the student in another public school or to receive a Hope Scholarship to attend an eligible private school. If the student enrolls in a public school outside the district, the student is eligible for a transportation scholarship limited to \$750.

The bill requires the Department of Education to contract with an independent entity to conduct an annual evaluation of the program. The entity must review the school climate and code of student conduct at each public school at which 10 or more reported incidents occurred to determine areas for improvement. The review must include an assessment of the investigation of incidents; analysis of school incident and discipline data; the effectiveness of communication with students, parents, and personnel; and challenges and obstacles to implementing recommendations. The entity must also identify best practices from the schools to which students transferred.

The entity will also review the performance of participating students enrolled in private schools at which at least 51 percent of total enrolled students are program participants. Parents of participating students will be surveyed to determine academic, safety, and school climate satisfaction and to identify any challenges or obstacles in addressing the incident or use of the scholarship. The bill requires school districts to notify scholarship students in private schools who wish to participate in the statewide student assessment program or the Florida Alternate Assessment of the locations and times at which they may take all statewide assessments.

The HSP is funded by taxpayers who make an eligible contribution to a scholarship funding organization. The credit may not exceed the amount of taxes owed. Each eligible contribution is limited to a single payment of \$20 at the time of purchase of a motor vehicle or at the time of registration of a motor vehicle that was not purchased from a dealer. The purchaser elects whether or not to contribute at the time of the purchase or registration of the vehicle. Contributions must be made to a dealer at the time of purchase or to an agent of the Department of Revenue (DOR) at the time of registration if the vehicle was not purchased from a dealer.

The bill passed the House PreK-12 Innovation Subcommittee favorably and is now in the PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee.

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