

Education Alert

Legislation of Vital Concern to Miami-Dade County's Students

DATE: March 12, 2018
TO: Members of the Miami-Dade Congressional Delegation
FROM: Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools
SUBJECT: **SUPPORT NEW RESOURCES AND FLEXIBILITY FOR SCHOOL SAFETY**



As Congress works to finalize its FY 2018 budget, the Parkland school shooting has drawn attention to the need for additional measures that would enhance school safety. Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) urges Congress to **support new resources and flexibility—on top of full FY 2018 education funding—to increase annual funds and grants for school safety.**

BACKGROUND: M-DCPS has re-examined opportunities to strengthen school safety after the Parkland, FL, shooting of February 14, 2018. While specific measures vary by campus, three broad strategies can help avert or limit harmful consequences of future attacks:

1. **Security personnel.** M-DCPS already spends \$50 million annually in safety and security but receives less than \$10 million for this purpose from state funds. We currently fund over 100 school police officers in day-to-day field operations, but we need additional officers, security protocols, and security training to serve 340 campuses.
2. **Security infrastructure.** Despite M-DCPS' capital investments in security technology, needs far outpace local capacity in protecting over 45 million square feet of existing campus space. Solutions include entry security, doors that can self-lock in emergencies, and impact glass to prevent a shooter from targeting students through windows.
3. **Mental health.** During any given school year, an estimated 20 percent of youth have an identifiable mental health issue. M-DCPS seeks more school-based mental health professionals, more training to de-escalate and address unacceptable behaviors, wider use of social and emotional learning curricula, and expanded "See Something, Say Something" efforts. Counselors and social workers with expert training should identify students and families experiencing crisis or trauma, or demonstrating at-risk behaviors, so as to provide prevention, intervention, referral, and follow-up services.

ACTION NEEDED: We applaud Florida Congressional Members as they sponsor and **support greater resources and flexibility to enhance school safety.** Several complementary steps under consideration by Congress could address these needs, including:

- **Increasing FY 2018 funds for Titles II and IV** to provide training and improvements;
- **Expanding flexibility for the new funds** to meet annual security needs, as proposed in the *School Safety and Mental Health Services Improvement Act* (S. 2513); and
- **Restoration and funding of competitive grants** to make strategic safety upgrades, as proposed in the *STOP School Violence Act of 2018* (H.R. 4909), and to fund school police.

For further information, please contact Ms. Iraida Mendez-Cartaya, Associate Superintendent, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Grants Administration, and Community Engagement, at 305-995-2532.

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