

Education Alert

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

Date: July 23, 2003
To: Florida House Delegation
From: Merrett R. Stierheim, Superintendent of Schools
Re: **U.S. HOUSE UNDER-FUNDING OF EDUCATION IN FY 2004 APPROPRIATIONS BILL**

Floridians expect Congress to provide the highest funding levels possible for education, consistent with promises in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Individuals with Disabilities Education (IDEA) Acts, and the Budget Resolution for FY04, H.Con. Res. 95. Such increases are critical if school districts are to achieve the ambitious federal goals for annual progress in educating all children, including those with disabilities or from high-poverty neighborhoods. In the FY04 Labor, Health, Human Services and Education Appropriations bill, **Miami-Dade County Public Schools strongly urges the House to increase education funding to the levels promised in the Budget Resolution, the IDEA Act, and the NCLB Act.**

BACKGROUND: Unless action is taken, federal funding in the FY04 Appropriations bill is far short of what school districts need to serve low-income and disabled children.

At present, Title I fully serves only about one of three low-income children who are eligible. The NCLB Act has now increased accountability for educational progress of all children, including those in the bottom quarter of achievement, and promised substantial funding increases in NCLB programs to help schools meet these goals. Under the NCLB, Title I alone was to be increased \$6 B, yet the FY04 Appropriations bill provides a mere \$381 million for all NCLB programs.

Similarly, federal funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) remains far short of the full 40% share, meeting less than half of this commitment. When the U.S. House of Representatives passed the reauthorization of IDEA (H.R. 1350), assurances were made that IDEA does not need to be made mandatory because Congress will meet its obligation through discretionary increases. Only two months later, the House Appropriations Committee is proposing to reduce the authorized \$2.2 B increase to only \$1 billion.

RECOMMENDATION: America's educational infrastructure, the foundation of our economy, cannot be neglected during times of economic stress and increased federal accountability. To fulfill the promise of federal legislation and meet the needs of our students, Miami-Dade County Public Schools **respectfully requests your advocacy to increase the education budget by \$2.2 B for IDEA and by substantially more than .38 B for NCLB, as called for in those Acts and in the Budget Resolution.**

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