

Education Alert

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

Date: April 30, 2002
To: South Florida Congressional Delegation
From: Merrett R. Stierheim, Superintendent of Schools
Re: **OPPOSE EXPANDING SUPERWAIVER TO H.R. 4092**

The welfare reform legislation that includes the "superwaiver", H.R. 4092, is scheduled to be considered by the House Education and the Workforce Committee this Wednesday, May 1, 2002. Committee amendments will be offered during this meeting expanding the superwaiver to include Perkins. **Miami-Dade County Public Schools strongly opposes this measure.**

BACKGROUND: In a move echoing the block grant threat during the last Perkins reauthorization, the Perkins Act is once again threatened with inclusion in a welfare reform/job training "block grant" under a provision called a "superwaiver." Under this proposal, Perkins is singled out from other K-12 and postsecondary education programs as the one that is expendable to schools. States, through the governor, would have the authority to request a waiver of Perkins requirements, allowing funds to be used for welfare reform efforts outside the education system. Every program would need to make a significant effort to safeguard their funds from being merged into welfare reform programs. Including Perkins in the superwaiver would lead to:

- Loss of funds to career and technical education programs, including secondary and postsecondary programs. Even if the waiver would only apply to postsecondary programs, secondary programs could still lose significant amounts of Perkins money.
- Potential push for lowering the amount of Perkins funds that a state gives to secondary programs to allow more money to flow through the postsecondary side and into job training programs. Undoubtedly, there would be political pressure within the state to move more money into to the postsecondary system in order for the governor to access the funds through the use of a waiver (this would not benefit community colleges, as they would be under pressure to waive their funds in favor of welfare reform efforts).
- Uncertainty about state authority for Perkins programs, which in many states are not under the governor's control, and potential usurping of power from education authorities.
- Significant maneuvering at the state and local level to put pressure on education officials to waive their Perkins funds. While a local "sign off" requirement may be added, local programs would come under significant pressure from the governor and local job training and welfare reform officials to participate in the waiver.

REQUESTED ACTION: Miami-Dade County Public Schools urges the rejection of this measure.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools ♦ 1450 N.E. 2nd Ave. ♦ Suite 562 ♦ Miami, FL 33132
Telephone: 305/995-1426 ♦ Facsimile: 305/358-8706
e-mail: prutledge@dadeschools.net email: cmanrique@sbab.dade.k12.fl.us