

Education Alert

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

Date: September 24, 2002
To: Florida House Delegation
From: Merrett R. Stierheim, Superintendent of Schools
Re: **U.S. HOUSE UNDER-FUNDING OF EDUCATION IN FY 2003 APPROPRIATIONS BILL**

As Florida and local school districts struggle with ongoing budget cuts, many Floridians expect Congress to provide the highest funding levels possible for education. Substantial increases are needed over the FY 2002 budget to preserve needed programs, to educate increased numbers of students with special needs or limited English proficiency, and to address a teacher shortage and a growing need to repair facilities and upgrade technology. In the FY 2003 Labor-Health and Human Services (HHS)-Education Appropriations bill, **Miami-Dade County Public Schools strongly urges the House to adopt a funding increase at least to the levels currently approved by the Senate** to strengthen support for low-income students, students with disabilities, postsecondary tuition grants, and career and technical education programs.

BACKGROUND: At present, Title I fully serves only about one-third of all low-income children who are eligible; similarly, federal funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) remains far short of the full 40% share. Through his FY 2003 budget proposal, the President proposed a minimal increase of only \$400 million for educational programs, with the elimination of \$1.8 billion in valued programs. Career and technical education, for example, is an integral component of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, but the President's budget would cut youth and adult job-training programs by a combined \$412 million.

On the House side, H.R. 5320 mirrors the president's budget request, reducing funding levels for many key programs and providing inadequate resources to meet the goals and new requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA). House leadership may bring the bill directly to the House floor because the proposal does not have the support to pass out of Committee. As stated by Rep. Michael Castle (R-DE), chair of the Subcommittee on Education Reform, "[the bill] can't be cured by amendment. It has to be cured by additional funds."

The Senate appropriations bill has moved through the committee process and is waiting for floor debate. It provides \$4.2 billion over FY 2002 for education but is still not sufficient to meet current demands and new responsibilities outlined in the NCLBA, and it currently provides no funding increase in career and technical education programs. An amendment may add \$4.5 billion to the education appropriation, for a total of \$8.7 billion over last year's level, to increase support for low-income Title I programs, IDEA, and Pell grants for postsecondary tuition.

RECOMMENDATION: America's educational infrastructure, the foundation of our economy, cannot be neglected during times of economic stress and increased federal accountability. Miami-Dade County Public Schools **respectfully requests your advocacy to increase the education budget at least to the level currently approved by the Senate, including a net increase in career and technical education under the Carl D. Perkins Act.**

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