

Education Alert

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

Date: September 2, 2003
To: Florida Senate Delegation
From: Merrett R. Stierheim, Superintendent of Schools
Re: **CONGRESSIONAL 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. 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 Senate to support amendments to S. 1356 that substantially increase education funding, as needed to meet our obligations under the NCLB and IDEA Acts.**

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.

Title I fully serves only about one of three low-income children who are eligible, yet the NCLB Act has increased accountability for educational progress of all children, including those in the bottom quarter of achievement. Substantial funding increases were promised for NCLB programs to help schools meet these goals, including a \$6 B increase for Title I alone.

Unfortunately, S. 1356 provides a mere \$666 million for Title I, along with a \$20 million cut in Title III bilingual programs. Today, in the third year of NCLB, the proposed budget not only falls short of the authorized 2004 funding level, but fails to meet the authorized level for 2002, the initial year of NCLB.

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. S. 1356 proposes 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 **thanks you for your continued advocacy on behalf of education and respectfully requests you to vote in support of amendments to S. 1356 that increase funding for critical education programs.**

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