

Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, Board Member

**SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION NO. 13-085 OF THE
SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, RECOGNIZING
JEAN-ROBERT LAFORTUNE, HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS ADVOCATE**

COMMITTEE: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**LINK TO STRATEGIC
FRAMEWORK: STUDENT, PARENT, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Since 1998, Jean-Robert Lafortune has been an advocate for human and civil rights for Haitian nationals living in the United States. As the co-founder of the Haitian-American Grassroots Coalition (HAGC), Mr. Lafortune is well known in the community as a consensus builder who promotes dialogue, mutual understanding and tolerance among Miami's disparate ethnic groups.

Mr. Lafortune came to the United States in 1980. Following his graduate studies at Florida International University in 1991, he had the intention of returning to Haiti to put his acquired knowledge to use. Those plans changed, however, when Mr. Lafortune began assisting Physicians for Humanity in an emergency effort to coordinate an airlift of medical supplies and food into Port-au-Prince.

In 1997, Mr. Lafortune was tapped by Congresswoman Carrie P. Meek to head a major Haitian grassroots initiative, which culminated in the enactment of landmark legislation in the United States Congress, the signing of the Haitian Refugee Immigrant Fairness Act (HRIFA) of 1998. This legislation provided immigration relief to 50,000 Haitians who were in limbo status in the United States as a result of the Haitian refugee exodus in the early 1990s.

During the past decade, Mr. Lafortune has lead several diplomatic missions to speak with heads of states of the Caribbean to advocate for enhanced regional policies for better treatment of Haitians. In addition, he has headed the Haitian Diaspora Working Group since 2011, which works tirelessly to help Haiti's reconstruction after the devastating earthquake of 2010. Several honors have been bestowed upon Mr. Lafortune, including the Western Union Immigration Advocacy Award and Social Worker of the Year Award by the Association of Social Workers in Miami-Dade County.

Currently, Mr. Lafortune is the Director of the Citizen Participation Division at the Miami-Dade County Community Action Agency, which advocates for self-sufficiency and empowerment of the poor. Mr. Lafortune should be commended for being a tireless and dedicated advocate for the people of Haiti and the Haitian communities of Miami-Dade County and the United States.

ACTION PROPOSED BY

DR. DOROTHY BENDROSS-MINDINGALL:

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve Resolution No. 13-085 of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, recognizing Jean-Robert Lafortune, Human and Civil Rights Advocate.

**Replacement
H-20**

**RESOLUTION NO. 13-085
OF THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA,
RECOGNIZING JEAN-ROBERT LAFORTUNE, HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS ADVOCATE**

WHEREAS, since 1998, Jean-Robert Lafortune has been an advocate for human and civil rights for Haitian nationals living in the United States. As the co-founder of the Haitian-American Grassroots Coalition (HAGC), Mr. Lafortune is well known within the community as a consensus builder who promotes dialogue, mutual understanding and tolerance among the Miami's disparate ethnic groups; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Lafortune came to the United States in 1980. Following his graduate studies at Florida International University in 1991, he had the intention of returning to Haiti to put his acquired knowledge to use. Those plans changed, however, when Mr. Lafortune began assisting Physicians for Humanity in an emergency effort to coordinate an airlift of medical supplies and food into Port-au-Prince; and

WHEREAS, in 1997, Mr. Lafortune was tapped by Congresswoman Carrie P. Meek to head a major Haitian grassroots initiative, which culminated in the enactment of landmark legislation in the United States Congress, the signing of the Haitian Refugee Immigrant Fairness Act (HRIFA) of 1998; and

WHEREAS, during the past decade, Mr. Lafortune has lead several diplomatic missions to speak with heads of Caribbean states to advocate for new policies ensuring better treatment of Haitians; and

WHEREAS, he has headed the Haitian Diaspora Working Group since 2011, which has worked tirelessly to help Haiti's reconstruction after the devastating earthquake of 2010; and

WHEREAS, currently, Mr. Lafortune is the Director of the Citizen Participation Division at the Miami-Dade County Community Action Agency, which advocates for self-sufficiency and empowerment of the poor;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve Resolution No. 13-085 of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, recognizing Jean-Robert Lafortune, Human and Civil Rights Advocate.

A copy of this resolution is placed in the permanent records of this Board.

Presented this eighth day of May, A.D. 2013

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

CHAIR

ATTEST:

Secretary