

Ms. Raquel Regalado, Board Member

**SUBJECT:                   STUDENT IDENTITY THEFT**

**COMMITTEE:               SCHOOL SUPPORT ACCOUNTABILITY**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC  
FRAMEWORK:               SCHOOL/DISTRICT LEADERSHIP**

In our digital age, it should come as no surprise that identify theft, defined as the successful or attempted misuse of personal information to commit fraud, is expected to surpass traditional theft as the leading form of property crime in the United States. In fact, nationwide, about 16.6 million persons, or 7% of all U.S. residents age 16 or older, were victims of one or more incidents of identity theft in 2012, according to a survey by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. In a similar finding, the Federal Trade Commission's Consumer Sentinel Network Data Book reported that children, 19 and under, made up 6% of all identity theft victims in 2012.

Notably, as part of these findings, the Federal Trade Commission ranked the state of Florida first among all U.S. states for identity theft in 2013. Furthermore, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office, identity theft in Miami, Florida has currently reached "near epidemic proportions." In fact, Florida's rate of 192.9 complaints per 100,000 residents is stunted by the Miami rate of 340.4 complaints per 100,000 residents.

A recent trend in Florida, the nations' capital of fraud, is that identity thieves are using the personal information of children and adolescents for frauds that go far beyond income tax fraud. For example, a child's private information may be used to request government benefits, open bank accounts, apply for credit cards, loans, utility services, public and private housing, to rent a place to live, and even to open public service accounts. As such, this misuse of personal information could affect the lives and credits of these children for decades after they graduate from high school.

And while in Florida, an estimated 500,000 children under age 5 are victims of identity theft, thieves are now targeting school age children. So much so, that school age children have become the preferred target for identity thieves because their information can be used and reused without detection for longer periods of time.

At Miami-Dade County Public Schools, we recently had a criminal case involving the identity theft of nearly 400 Miami-Dade Public Schools students by a cafeteria manager. In response, our district has modified the information that employees can access through our communications systems. However, considering the surge of identity theft statewide, our district must go beyond this one incident and develop a comprehensive plan to protect the personal information of our students and inform our teachers, parents and students about the importance of protecting personal data.

As one of the few school districts that has its own police force, Miami-Dade County Public Schools is in a position to craft a comprehensive plan which could protect both the physical and digital collection, use, storage and destruction of the personal information of our over 345,000 students, and so this item requests that the M-DCPS Police Department, alongside M-DCPS Information Technologies Department, M-DCPS School Site Operations and the Parent Academy implement a comprehensive plan to protect the identities of all our students and thus comply with our obligation to safeguard their privacy.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY  
MS. RAQUEL REGALADO:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, through the Superintendent, direct the Police Chief in conjunction with other departments to develop a comprehensive plan to ensure that the physical and digital collection, use, and storage of the personal information of our students are safeguarded.