

Dr. Lawrence Feldman, Board Member

**SUBJECT: REQUEST APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION NO. 16-108 OF
THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA,
RECOGNIZING WHITNEY UNTIEDT**

**COMMITTEE: INNOVATION, GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS, AND
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC
BLUEPRINT: HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TEACHERS, LEADERS AND STAFF**

Whitney Untiedt is a partner in the Miami office of Akerman LLC (Akerman) and serves as its Director of Pro Bono Initiatives. She supervises the firm's many pro bono programs, and develops strategic partnerships and collaborations that align with Akerman's philanthropic focus on education and youth development.

As a member of The Florida Bar's first Leadership Academy and Chair of its Public Interest Law Section, she has proven to be a state and nation-wide leader in recent efforts to revisit the lengthy and life in prison sentencing of juveniles. In March 2015, The Florida Supreme Court found the long term or life sentences of juveniles unconstitutional. The justices unanimously agreed that juveniles tried as adults for non-homicide crimes cannot be sentenced with no chance of release nor to "nonlife" prison terms that will likely exceed their natural lifespans. Also applying retroactively in Florida was the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Miller v. Alabama* holding that juveniles convicted of murder cannot be sentenced to life without any "meaningful" sentence review.

Ms. Untiedt led the call to action for Florida's child advocates to collaborate on a solid plan of assistance for juveniles affected by these decisions. She is credited with coordinating high profile pro bono lawyers for a roundtable discussion to ensure that every juvenile offender eligible for resentencing was able to access legal help and submit motions to initiate a resentencing. Her team prioritized the cases, developed strategies and personally recruited attorneys to assist with this pro bono initiative. She also collaborated with leadership in the Florida Public Defender Association, managing attorneys at the Southern Poverty Law Center, ACLU of Florida, and board members of the Florida Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (FACLD). Her efforts inspired the FACDL to underwrite a free two-day training for 200 Florida lawyers with Ms. Untiedt and 11th Circuit Public Defender Carlos Martinez facilitating the training.

Ms. Untiedt's efforts continue to reap benefits for thousands of juveniles whose cases are receiving review and for whom parole is now a consideration. She continues to advocate for lawyer training and serves as a resource to states nation-wide looking to her work as model to replicate.

Ms. Untiedt's is to be commended for her well-documented and untiring efforts to safeguard the rights of juveniles and children throughout the State. Prior to joining Akerman she spent a year as an Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps Legal Fellow, followed by nine years as an Assistant Public Defender in Florida, where she developed a specialized practice focusing on the representation of high-risk juveniles involved in delinquency and dependency proceedings. Ms. Untiedt is co-director of the Southern Juvenile Defender Center, a member of the Florida Children's Justice Act Task Force, and immediate past chair of the Florida Juvenile Court Rules Committee.

ACTION PROPOSED BY

DR. LAWRENCE FELDMAN:

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve Resolution No. 16-108 of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, recognizing Whitney Untiedt.

**RESOLUTION NO. 16-108
OF THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA,
RECOGNIZING WHITNEY UNTIEDT**

WHEREAS, Whitney Untiedt is a partner in the Miami office of Akerman LLC (Akerman) and serves as its Director of Pro Bono Initiatives. She supervises the firm's many pro bono programs, and develops strategic partnerships and collaborations that align with Akerman's philanthropic focus on education and youth development; and

WHEREAS, as a member of The Florida Bar's first Leadership Academy and Chair of its Public Interest Law Section, she has proven to be a state and nation-wide leader in recent efforts to revisit the lengthy and life in prison sentencing of juveniles. In March 2015, The Florida Supreme Court found the long term or life sentences of juveniles unconstitutional. The justices unanimously agreed that juveniles tried as adults for non-homicide crimes cannot be sentenced with no chance of release nor to "nonlife" prison terms that will likely exceed their natural lifespans.

WHEREAS, Ms. Untiedt led the call to action for Florida's child advocates to collaborate on a solid plan of assistance for juveniles affected by these decisions. She is credited with coordinating high profile pro bono lawyers for a roundtable discussion to ensure that every juvenile offender eligible for resentencing was able to access legal help and submit motions to initiate a resentencing. Her team prioritized the cases, developed strategies and personally recruited attorneys to assist with this pro bono initiative. She also collaborated with leadership in the Florida Public Defender Association, managing attorneys at the Southern Poverty Law Center, ACLU of Florida, and board members of the Florida Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (FACDL). Her efforts inspired the FACDL to underwrite a free two-day training for 200 Florida lawyers with Ms. Untiedt and 11th Circuit Public Defender Carlos Martinez facilitating the training.

WHEREAS, her efforts continue to reap benefits for thousands of juveniles whose cases are receiving review and for whom parole is now a consideration. She continues to advocate for lawyer training and serves as a resource to states nation-wide looking to her work as model to replicate.

WHEREAS, Ms. Untiedt's is to be commended for her well-documented and untiring efforts to safeguard the rights of juveniles and children throughout the State. Prior to joining Akerman, she spent a year as an Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps Legal Fellow, followed by nine years as an Assistant Public Defender in Florida, where she developed a specialized practice focusing on the representation of high-risk juveniles involved in delinquency and dependency proceedings.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve Resolution No. 16-108 of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, recognizing Whitney Untiedt.

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

Presented this twenty-third day of November, A.D. 2016

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

CHAIR

ATTEST:

Secretary