

Ms. Lubby Navarro, Board Member

**SUBJECT: REQUEST THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA TO RECOGNIZE APRIL 2017 AS NATIONAL AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH**

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

**LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: INFORMED, ENGAGED AND EMPOWERED STAKEHOLDERS**

Autism is a pervasive developmental disorder affecting the social, communication and behavioral skills of those affected by it. In order to highlight the growing need for concern and awareness about autism, the Autism Society has been celebrating National Autism Awareness Month since the 1970s. The United States recognizes April as a special time for everyone to educate the public about autism and issues within the autism community.

The Autism Society, the nation's leading grassroots autism organization was founded in 1965 by Dr. Bernard Rimland, Dr. Ruth Sullivan and many other parents of children with autism. They have spearheaded numerous pieces of state and local legislation, including the 2006 Combating Autism Act, the first federal autism-specific law.

National Autism Awareness Month draws attention to the increasing need for concern and awareness about the condition being called a national epidemic. As more health professionals become proficient in diagnosing autism, more children are being diagnosed on the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), resulting in rates as high as 1 in 68 children nationally. } Revised

National Autism Awareness Month provides the perfect opportunity for individuals and organizations to educate their communities about autism. Many Autism Society local chapters hold special events in their communities throughout the month of April. Autism Speaks Miami has an annual walk that unites families, service providers and many supporters across the country to help fuel innovative research and resources that help individuals impacted by autism.

Every year during the month of April, community organizations throughout Miami-Dade County join forces to create awareness about this cause which affects so many children in our community. This year's Autism Speaks Miami Walk will be held on Sunday, April 2, 2017 at Doral Central Park.

Miami Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) recognizes the importance of early identification and intervention through its Office of Exceptional Student Education. The office provides a wide range of developmentally appropriate learning opportunities and services in a variety of programs for the 4,362 students who have been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders. M-DCPS also collaborates with UM-NSU CARD, Autism Speaks, The Dan Marino Foundation, The Advocacy Network on Disabilities and the Autism Society of South Florida in an effort to increase awareness and support students and their families. } Revised

**ACTION PROPOSED BY**

**LUBBY NAVARRO:** That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, recognize April 2017 as National Autism Awareness Month.