

Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman, Board Member

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION NO. 18-028 OF THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, REQUESTING EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF UNUSED FUNDS FROM COACH AARON FEIS GUARDIAN PROGRAM

COMMITTEE: FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: SAFE, HEALTHY, AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act enacts provisions and initiatives that seek to address varying components of school and student safety. The law establishes the Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program, named in recognition of the heroic efforts of the school's coach who lost his life protecting students. Components of this particular program have caused debate and controversy among educational communities and safety advocates throughout the state.

Essentially, the program provides that sheriffs may establish, if they so choose, a Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program within their county and allows school districts to decide whether to participate in the program, if available in their county. For the 2018-19 fiscal year, the law appropriates \$500,000 in recurring funds and \$67 million in nonrecurring funds to the Department of Education to allocate to sheriffs' offices who establish this 'school guardian' program. It also outlines the certification and training requirements for the volunteer non-instructional school employees (classroom teachers of the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps, current service members, and/or former law enforcement officers may also participate) who would seek certification as school guardians, allowing them to be armed and aid in the prevention or abatement of active assailant incidents on campus.

The law further affirms these certified school guardians meet the requirement, also mandated by this law, that district school boards establish or assign officers at each school facility. School districts throughout the state, including Miami-Dade, Broward, Duval, Hillsborough, Leon, Palm Beach, Seminole, Pasco, and Pinellas, have indicated they may elect not to participate in the Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program, noting well-documented concerns from educational stakeholders and communities throughout the state and nation.

In addressing the challenges of The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety and the mandate relevant to assigning officers to each school facility, the Florida Association of District School Superintendents (FADSS) prepared a report for the March 27, 2018 Florida State Board of Education Meeting citing:

"...many districts will have difficulty meeting the requirements to establish or assign one more more [sic] safe school officer at each school facility. The additional Safe Schools appropriation is for additional school resource officers. If these funds are not sufficient, coupled with the underlying Safe Schools allocation, superintendents are in a difficult position of having to consider participation in the Guardian Program when the school personnel and the community may be opposed to the program. In addition, the funds for the guardian program may not be spent due to superintendents and school boards not using the program. Superintendents request that you support and recommend that these unspent dollars be used in districts for additional school resource officers or other school safety measures."

The FADSS statement highlights the dilemma created by this bill, which woefully underfunds its own mandate to staff each school with an officer. It places those boards and superintendents who stand by the conviction that arms on school campuses belong solely in the hands of law enforcement professionals in a position where they must forgo access to needed resources. In underfunded districts, this presents an unconscionable burden for those who value the sanctity of the schoolhouse and believe the arming of school-site personnel is fraught with clearly foreseeable negative consequences. Acknowledging a growing number of counties who have indicated they will not participate in this program, The Department of Education and relevant decision-makers should consider distributing Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program funds in an equitable way that recognizes and respects the needs, desire, and efforts of all counties to meet the law's mandate.

The purpose of this item is to establish consensus amongst the Board in support of Resolution 18-028 requesting the unused balance of funds from the Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program be equitably distributed, based on each district's proportionate share of the state's total unweighted full-time equivalent student enrollment, to school districts who did not participate in the program for the sole purpose of hiring additional school resource and school safety officers. Additionally, this item authorizes the Superintendent's transmittal of said resolution to appropriate outlets inclusive of the Governor, the Commissioner of Education, the State Board of Education, the State Legislature and other relevant stakeholders.

This item has been reviewed and approved by the School Board Attorney's Office as to form and legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. LAWRENCE S. FELDMAN:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve Resolution 18-028 of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, requesting the unused balance of funds from the Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program be equitably distributed, based on each district's proportionate share of the state's total unweighted full-time equivalent student enrollment, to school districts who did not participate in the program for the sole purpose of hiring additional school resource and safety officers and authorize the Superintendent's transmittal to appropriate outlets inclusive of the Governor, the Commissioner of Education, the State Board of Education, the State Legislature and other relevant stakeholders.

RESOLUTION NO. 18-028
OF THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA,
REQUESTING THE UNUSED BALANCE OF FUNDS FROM THE COACH AARON FEIS
GUARDIAN PROGRAM BE EQUITABLY DISTRIBUTED, BASED ON EACH DISTRICT'S
PROPORTIONATE SHARE OF THE STATE'S TOTAL UNWEIGHTED FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT
STUDENT ENROLLMENT, TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS WHO DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE
PROGRAM FOR THE SOLE PURPOSE OF HIRING ADDITIONAL SCHOOL RESOURCE AND
SAFETY OFFICERS

WHEREAS, The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act enacts provisions and initiatives that seek to address varying components of school and student safety. The law mandates that district school boards assign officers to each school facility and also establishes the Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program, named in recognition of the heroic efforts of the school's coach who lost his life protecting students; and

WHEREAS, according to The Florida Educator's Association, 1,500 deputies statewide would be required for every campus to be staffed. The Florida's Sheriffs Association has reported it would cost \$360 million to comply, while the budget allocates \$162 million. Districts throughout the State have vocalized their concern that this is an under-funded mandate; and

WHEREAS, for the 2018-19 fiscal year, the law appropriates \$500,000 in recurring funds and \$67 million in nonrecurring funds to the Department of Education to allocate to sheriff's offices who establish a Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program; and

WHEREAS, components of the Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program have caused debate and controversy among educational communities and safety advocates throughout the state. Numerous school districts fundamentally oppose arming school employees and stand by the conviction that, on a school campus, arms belong solely in the hands of law enforcement professionals; and

WHEREAS, school districts who fundamentally oppose arming school employees and adhere to their conviction must forgo access to needed resources appropriated to the Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program; and

WHEREAS, acknowledging a growing number of counties who have indicated they will not participate in this program, The Department of Education and relevant decision-makers should consider distributing the Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program funds in an equitable way that recognizes and respects the needs, desire, and efforts of all counties to meet the law's mandate; and

WHEREAS, The School Board of Miami-Dade is actively planning, accessing available resources, and working with organizations, law enforcement agencies, and municipalities to staff each school site with an officer, even as insurmountable funding challenges are evident. Funding to further train and certify school resource officers and grow our existing Miami-Dade Schools Police Department would greatly assist in meeting compliance with the law's mandate; and

WHEREAS, we encourage the unused balance of funds from the Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program be equitably distributed, based on each district's proportionate share of the state's total unweighted full-time equivalent student enrollment, to school districts who did not participate in the program for the sole purpose of hiring additional school resource and safety officers.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve Resolution No. 18-028 of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, requesting the unused balance of funds from the Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program be equitably distributed, based on each district's proportionate share of the state's total unweighted full-time equivalent student enrollment, to school districts who did not participate in the program for the sole purpose of hiring additional school resource and safety officers.

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

Presented this twenty-fifth day of April, A.D. 2018

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

CHAIR

ATTEST:

Secretary