

Dr. Steve Gallon III, Board Member

SUBJECT: TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

LINK TO STRATEGIC

BLUEPRINT: SAFE, HEALTHY AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) is committed to ensuring the safety and security of its schools, employees, community members, and most important, its students. This commitment has consistently extended beyond the school and deep into the homes, neighborhoods, and communities in which children, youth, and families reside. Many of these communities, however, are vexed with poverty, crime, and unimaginable acts of violence, often involving and victimizing the very students the District endeavors to educate.

Over the past several years, the issue of gun violence and senseless deaths among children and youth in Miami-Dade County has garnered local, state, and national attention. They have also resulted in an outcry from the public for the development, implementation, and provision of meaningful, measurable, and sustainable solutions to end the continuous gun violence and loss of young lives in Miami-Dade County. The senseless deaths of children and youth as a result of gun violence often spark what many see as “*episodic*” outrage from the public, elected officials, and leaders throughout the community, which quickly dissipates---leaving children, youth, families, neighborhoods, and communities to continue to languish and repeat this vicious, tragic cycle time and time again. This repeated cycle manifests in limited zip codes which are too often distinguished by race, ethnicity, and social and economic class.

Before the 2018 tragedy in Parkland that gripped a nation, this cycle of gun violence has claimed the lives of more than 1,000 children and youth in Florida over the span of a decade---with nearly 350 in Miami-Dade County---the most in the entire state. Again, most of the victims are often poor and black. According to data from the Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, locally, a black child is a dozen times more likely to be killed in a shooting in Miami-Dade County than his or her white counterparts. In Broward and Palm Beach counties, young blacks die at lower rates, but still died about four and five times more often than their white peers, respectively. Statewide, black kids died seven times more often than white children.

In response, there has been increased declarations and recognition from elected officials, leadership, community groups and organizations, anchor institutions, and even M-DCPS, that a strategic, coordinated effort and plan of action, inclusive of best practices, are needed to abate and end violence in communities that are persistently afflicted.

At the School Board Meeting of June 22, 2016, School Board Chairwoman Ms. Perla Tabares Hantman proffered *Agenda Item H-7, Youth Safety* which endorsed the exploration of entering into an interlocal agreement with Miami-Dade County, the City of Miami, the Children's Trust, and other municipalities to address and stem the tide of gun violence in Miami-Dade County.

Further, at the School Board Meeting of December 14, 2016, School Board Chairwoman Ms. Perla Tabares Hantman again proffered *Revised Agenda Item H-6, Youth Programming*. This item reflected one of the District's first steps in addressing the issues of violence among children and youth in Miami-Dade County and encouraged the Superintendent to "seek out opportunities to collaborate with entities than can deliver, free of charge to the children, high quality and engaging youth programming during out of school time." This item, which passed unanimously, was designed as an effort to break the cycle of violence.

At the School Board Meeting of April 5, 2017, the Superintendent proffered *Revised Agenda Item A-3, Implementation of Youth Safety Initiative-Together for Children* which requested authorization to finalize and implement Together for Children Neighborhood Action Plans; Execute Cooperative Agreement to include the Foundation for New Education Initiatives and Miami-Dade County to implement the evidence-based referral and family engagement system, and provide an annual report on the progress of the Together for Children Initiative.

Since that time, incidents of gun violence and deaths among children and youth have continued to rise. The year of 2017 ended with an extremely high barrage of bullets on the streets of Miami-Dade County which took the lives of several teens and 2-year old Thomas Carnell-Williams. Also, since that time, while the loudness of bullets and screams continue from carnage and death among children, youth, and families in certain communities in certain zip codes, to many, there appears to be a growing, deafening silence around the promised progress of strategic, coordinated programs and plans of action of initiatives such as Together for Children.

M-DCPS, as the lead entity of Together for Children and perceived initiator of the initiative, must ensure that the vision, mission, goals, and objectives are being implemented and achieved with accountability, fidelity, and transparency. The commitment reflected in recommend #3 of the *Revised Agenda Item A-3, Implementation of Youth Safety Initiative-Together for Children* which states that the Superintendent will "provide an annual report on the progress of the *Together for Children Initiative*" reflects the Board and Superintendent's commitment to shared accountability, fidelity, and transparency, and must be followed. To date, there is a growing concern as to the implementation status and measurable impact of the Together for Children Initiative and related action plans and any nexus between the intended goal of stemming and eradicating youth gun violence and the senseless loss of young lives.

Children and youth in Miami-Dade County remain under assault and continue to die from guns. Nationally, in 2017, a child or teen was killed with a gun every 2 hours and 34 minutes. More children under five were killed by guns than law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty.

Locally, gun violence saturates our children's lives and remains the second leading cause of death for all children and teens ages 1-19. Sadly, too many children feel that there are no safe spaces in their communities or homes. All children and youth in Miami-Dade County must be guaranteed the right to live, learn and grow up safely—free from violence and fear. M-DCPS must continue to play a vital role in this work.

This item seeks to direct the Superintendent to provide a comprehensive update on the status of the Together for Children Initiative, inclusive of financial expenditures to date; the implementation of evidence-based solutions and strategies as well as the achievement of measurable goals and objectives designed to stem and eradicate youth gun violence; and any program, policy, practice, and/or partnership recommendations and/or adjustments moving forward.

This item has been reviewed by the School Board Attorney for legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. STEVE GALLON III:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, direct the Superintendent to:

1. provide a comprehensive update on the status of the Together for Children Initiative, inclusive of:
 - a. financial expenditures to date;
 - b. the implementation of evidence-based solutions and strategies as well as the achievement of measurable goals and objectives designed to stem and eradicate youth gun violence;
 - c. any program, policy, practice, and/or partnership recommendations and/or adjustments moving forward; and
2. provide an update to the School Board at the Personnel, Student, School, and Community Support Committee Meeting no later than December 30, 2019.