

Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Board Member

SUBJECT: CARES ACT FUNDING AND TEACHER SUPPLY FLEXIBILITY

COMMITTEE: FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

LINK TO STRATEGIC

BLUEPRINT: SAFE, HEALTHY AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The decisions to reopen schools have depended mainly on the context and capacity of schools to plan, obtain or mobilize resources needed to activate hygiene and sanitation protocols, ensuring physical distancing, and building the capacity of teachers and educational support staff to deliver educational outcomes. These are unprecedented times and schools have had to rethink traditional ways of doing things, looking at different ways of mutualizing resources to support the teaching and learning process.

The traditional ways of classroom teaching have certainly been tested as students return to the schoolhouse with different instructional, social, and psychological challenges. Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) teachers have risen to those challenges and we must guarantee that teachers continue to be supported and provided with all the necessary tools to ensure a successful school year.

This agenda item is being proffered to analyze and review the possibility of additional financial support for teachers to ensure they have access to those supplementary tools they may feel are necessary to enhance a safe work environment where students learn. Two resources being recommended for consideration by the Board are the following: The Florida Teacher Classroom Supply Assistance Program and the allocation of additional resources for classroom teachers under the federally funded CARES ACT.

First, pursuant to Florida Statute 1012.71, the Teacher Classroom Supply Assistance Program describes specific guidelines for teachers to access these funds. Some of these include eligibility requirements, specific definition of a classroom teacher, teacher's statement acknowledging receipt of the funds, explicit timelines, and the distribution of unused funds, among others. For the 2020-2021 school year, M-DCPS has allocated \$336.00 for eligible employees that have completed the required acknowledgement by the stated deadline. The District has also provided a list of supplies and equipment that meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the statute.

Therefore, it is important to revisit the specific language in statute and request a waiver from the Florida Department of Education to provide flexibility including the extension of the timelines, the opportunity for teachers to have the choice to purchase already identified supplies and materials and/or for teachers to be able to purchase hygiene and sanitation supplies for their individual classrooms, including plexiglass shields, to enhance a safe work environment.

Second, this agenda item recommends that a specific allocation be approved by the Board to earmark up to \$175.00 from CARES ACT funds for PreK-12 M-DCPS classroom teachers, regardless of whether they are teaching online or face-to-face in the school building, with specific timelines and guidelines to be developed by the Superintendent of Schools, which will provide a choice for teachers to purchase classroom supplies and/or hygiene and sanitation supplies, including plexiglass shields and portable air purifiers.

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

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
MS. MARIA TERESA ROJAS:**

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

1. request a waiver from the Florida Department of Education to provide flexibility to Florida Statute 1012.71, *The Florida Teachers Classroom Supply Assistance Program*, including the extension of the timelines, the opportunity for teachers to have the choice to purchase already identified supplies and materials and/or for teachers to be able to purchase hygiene and sanitation supplies for their individual classrooms, including plexiglass shields and portable air purifiers;
2. allocate up to \$175.00 from CARES ACT funds for PreK-12 M-DCPS classroom teachers, regardless of whether they are teaching online or face-to-face in the school building, with specific timelines and guidelines to be developed by the Superintendent of Schools, which will provide a choice for teachers to purchase classroom supplies and/or hygiene and sanitation supplies, including plexiglass shields and portable air purifiers, with procedures in place to reallocate unspent funds to other districtwide health and sanitation strategies; and
3. provide a report to the Board by November 17, 2020.