

Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman, Board Member

**SUBJECT: COUNCIL OF GREAT CITY SCHOOLS 64<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE UPDATE**

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

The Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) is the only national organization exclusively representing the needs of urban public schools. Composed of 76 large city school districts, its mission is to promote the cause of urban schools and to advocate for inner-city students through legislation, research and media relations. The organization also provides a network for school districts sharing common problems to exchange information, and to collectively address new challenges as they emerge in order to deliver the best possible education for urban youth. National advocacy, service, and capacity building shape the bulk of activities carried out on behalf of the urban schools by the CGCS. Throughout the year and as one of the member districts, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) is able to access services in the areas of legislation and advocacy, research, communications, operations, teaching and learning, and leadership management, among others offered by the council. Through this membership, M-DCPS is able to share concerns and solutions with education counterparts coast-to-coast, capitalize on our strength in numbers, and build our expertise.

This year, the CGCS 64<sup>th</sup> Annual Fall Conference meeting was held virtually October 13-17, 2020. The conference, aptly titled *Championing Urban Education*, took on special meaning this year as districts across the nation grapple with numerous challenges brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic and social injustice. While sharing best practices related to academic performance, school finance, leadership, governance and management during this unprecedented time, school districts renewed their mission and reaffirmed their commitment to addressing the deficiencies that serve to inhibit the urban school districts students' academic achievement and access to educational opportunities.

The agenda included meetings of the Black and Latino Young Men and Boys/Black and Latina Women and Girls Task Force and the Board of Directors, both of which I have the honor to serve on. Amongst the speakers, districts had the opportunity to listen to First Lady Laura Bush, Best-selling Author Ibram X Kendi, Former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julian Castro, and New York Times Columnist Thomas Friedman. General and breakout sessions addressed timely and relevant topics that spanned the spectrum of issues districts are currently facing; noteworthy sessions included, *Deep Clean: Making Urban School Facilities Safe for Students and Employees*, *Coping Mechanisms: Supporting Social Emotional and Mental Health in our Great City Schools*, *Labor Negotiations in the Age of COVID-19*; *Delivering on Equity During a Pandemic*, *Working Feverishly: Federal Covid-19 Assistance for Urban Schools*, *Black Lives Matter: How Urban Schools are Providing Meaningful Education for African American Students*, *It's a Bird, it's a Plane: Urban Superintendents Discuss Fast Improving Schools under NAEP*, *Tik Tok – Quickly Shifting Urban Schools to Online Instruction*, *Daily Numbers: Using Data to Inform Urban Education*, among many others. Moreover, an all student panel conducted a town hall meeting addressing race and social justice issues.

More than ever, the CGCS plays a pivotal role in federal advocacy on behalf of students in large urban school districts as it understands that school districts' challenges have become exacerbated during this pandemic. The Council has dedicated efforts and resources to address the needs of our schools and share best practices and news related to COVID-19 via the council's website, <https://www.cgcs.org/corona>.

Looking ahead, the council has started a conversation centered on a new vision for the future for public education and what must be done to reshape, redesign, reengage and prepare all learners.

Good cause exists to vary from the published agenda as Council of the Council of Great City Schools Fall Annual Conference occurred after the publication of the agenda.

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, accept the Council of Great City Schools Fall Conference meeting update.