

Frank J. Bolaños, Member

SUBJECT: REFORMING OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

The best of bureaucratic systems evolve over time and continually adapt to the will of the people they are designed to serve.

For the better part of the last two years, a heightened awareness of our deficiencies have led our citizens to call for change in the delivery and governance of education in Miami-Dade.

Although many efforts have materialized, there remains a void in actions that alter the dynamics of decision-making and prioritize the education of our children, both of which will satisfy the public's need for confidence in our school system.

This item is an intent to demonstrate the School Board's support of meaningful reforms. Most of these issues will require voter referendum or action by the Florida Legislature to revise the Florida Constitution and State Statutes.

Reforming our public school system must be more than a spoken intent. Tangible and direct action is necessary to restore the public's trust in Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

For the purpose of this item, the question will be divided for an individual vote on each of the following:

- **Divide school district into smaller districts:**
Support a feasibility study to determine the appropriate size and criteria to be used in dividing the district. As observed in most municipalities, smaller units and authorities satisfy the need of citizens to make government more transparent, less bureaucratic and "closer to home." Policy-making by school boards of smaller districts will benefit from increased parental involvement and by reducing the administrative complexity of decisions made.
- **Municipal Conversion Charter School Districts:**
Support giving municipalities the ability to govern schools within their boundaries in partnership with educational research institutions. By opting for this conversion, local governments can place an individual focus on schools within a city and directly address the quality and delivery of education to the satisfaction of its constituents. Cities like Pembroke Pines, in partnership with Florida State University, have proven that educational performance can increase while partnering with a research institution. Urban schools, under the auspices of a city government, also have the potential to serve as full-service community centers which expand the educational community, enhance the quality of life and aid in empowerment strategies.

- **OPPAGA/Auditor General Progress Report:**
Transmit a report to the Florida Legislature and the Office of the Governor detailing progress made on recommendations from the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) and the Florida Auditor General. This analysis and review should consider the district's adherence to specific recommendations, established timetables, and include a comparison between estimated and actual budgetary savings realized. In areas where recommendations were not enacted, the district should be prepared to explain the non-compliance. Prior to approval by the School Board at its April meeting, a special session of the School Board and representatives from OPPAGA will be held to review said report. A summary of this report should also be published in the local daily newspapers.

- **Miami-Dade County Schools Real Estate & Construction Authority**
Support the creation of this body to oversee and execute all land acquisition, planning and construction activities. By transferring responsibility of these activities to an independent and accountable authority, the School Board can have educational issues and policies as its central focus as well as the day-to-day operations of the district. A third-party will also foster more creativity in meeting the demand for more schools. Equally as important, such a scenario would help restore confidence in the capital construction of our schools, which will be needed for additional bonding authority.

- **County-wide elections:**
Support consideration of the at-large election of the School Board Chair and two (2) board members, elected county-wide. These three at-large positions will provide the board with representatives of regional responsibility to their electorate and provide a balance to the interests of individual districts. A School Board Chair may also have a more executive role as found in Miami-Dade County and many local municipalities.

- **Term limits for School Board members:**
Support the creation of an 8 year limit on elective service on the school board. Elective office has evolved from the days of the professional politician to that of a citizen servant. By empowering more residents to become involved with educational policy-making, the School Board opens the door to more innovation and involvement from the community.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
MR. FRANK J. BOLAÑOS:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida confirm its interest in the reform initiatives via individual vote on each of the following:

- **Divide school district into smaller districts**
- **Municipal Conversion Charter School Districts**
- **OPPAGA/Auditor General Progress Report**
- **Miami-Dade County Schools Real Estate & Construction Authority**
- **County-wide elections**
- **Term limits for School Board members**