

Office of School Board Members  
Board Meeting of January 18, 2012

January 17, 2012

Mr. Renier Diaz de la Portilla, Board Member

**SUBJECT:                   REQUEST THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD TAKE AN OFFICIAL  
                                  POSITION ON FLORIDA SENATE BILL 98 RELATING TO  
                                  SCHOOL PRAYER**

**COMMITTEE:               INNOVATION,   EFFICIENCY,   AND   GOVERNMENTAL  
                                  RELATIONS**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC  
FRAMEWORK:               STUDENT, PARENT, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

State Senator Gary Siplin (D – Orlando) has filed SB 98 relating to student prayer in public schools. Specifically, the bill would authorize district school boards across the state to adopt resolutions that would allow inspirational messages, including, but not limited to, prayers of invocation or benediction, at secondary school events, and other school-related functions.

This bill would give school boards local control and the option to adopt resolutions at their discretion allowing prayers of invocation or benediction. The bill also specifies that said resolutions must have specific provisions such as: "all prayers of invocation or benediction will be non-sectarian and non-proselytizing in nature," as well as must be "given by student volunteers". It also provides that "school personnel may not participate in, or otherwise influence any student in, the determination of whether to use prayers."

As the largest school district in the state, and one of the most diverse, it is important that this Board take an official position on SB 98 for the benefit of our students and their overall freedom of speech and expression.

This item does not appear in the published agenda. There is good cause to vary from the Agenda given that the bill passed its second committee of reference last Thursday, days after the Board's item submission deadline, and may be scheduled for its first reading prior to the Board's February meeting.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY**

**MR. RENIER DIAZ LA PORTILLA:**       That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, take an official position on SB 98 relating to prayer in public schools.

**Good Cause  
H-30**

