

Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools

**SUBJECT: AMENDMENT OF THE ADOPTED STATE LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM TO INCLUDE SUPPORT FOR REVERSING THE INCREASED MINIMUM ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA NECESSARY TO QUALIFY FOR THE BRIGHT FUTURES SCHOLARSHIP SCHEDULED TO TAKE EFFECT JULY 1, 2013**

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

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

Since 1997, Florida's Bright Futures Scholarship program has helped over 600,000 students realize their dream of a college education. Unfortunately, if Florida law is not changed, far fewer young Floridians will benefit from this life changing opportunity beginning July 1, 2013, when the scholarship eligibility criteria will drastically increase, disproportionately impacting minority students.

Beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, students must score a minimum of 1170 on the SAT or 26 on the ACT in order to meet the minimum academic requirements for Bright Futures Scholarship eligibility. These requirements reflect a significant leap from the current criteria which asks for a 1020 on the SAT or 22 on the ACT. The requirement to maintain a 3.0 high school GPA, a cumulative representation of student's academic performance, remains unchanged from 2012-2013.

According to an internal analysis produced by the University of South Florida (USF) Office of Admissions, Recruitment, and Enrollment Planning, and obtained by the Florida College Access Network, the new initial eligibility requirements for Bright Futures Scholarships, based on increased standardized test scores, scheduled to take effect July 1, 2013, will have a significant negative impact on underrepresented minorities, particularly African American and Hispanic students. The total number of Bright Futures Scholarships awarded to African American students is expected to drop by over 75%, while the number of eligible Hispanic students is projected to decline by more than 60%.

More specifically, the USF analysis provides the following comparison between the number of eligible students under the current minimum criteria and those projected to be enrolling as freshmen the Fall of 2014:

- Approximately 2,700 African American freshmen statewide met minimum criteria for Bright Futures for Fall 2012, while only 650 are projected to meet the new criteria set for Fall 2014, a drop of more than 75%;
- Between 7,000 and 7,500 Hispanic freshmen statewide met minimum criteria for Bright Futures for Fall 2012, under the new requirement only between 2,700 and 3,000 would qualify, a drop of over 60%;
- Around 17,000 white freshmen met minimum criteria for Bright Futures for Fall 2012, however under the new requirement that number is reduced to 10,000 for Fall 2014, a drop of 41%; and
- Finally, between 1,600 and 1,700 Asian freshmen met minimum criteria for Bright Futures for Fall 2012, whereas 950 would likely qualify for Fall 2014, a drop of 42%.

Such a significant reduction in the access to assistance for incoming college students will certainly have a negative impact on the long term economic health of the state through the potential reduction of Florida's degreed workforce. Further, according to the study, the change to the Bright Futures Scholarship program will disproportionately affect the students and families from identified Florida counties, with Broward, Collier, Miami-Dade, Lee, Osceola and St. Lucie standing to lose the most.

We believe that all students can achieve high academic standards, but the current scheduled changes in the eligibility requirements for this important scholarship program represents a dramatic increase that disproportionately jeopardizes access for thousands of college-going minority students and relies too heavily on standardized test scores for measuring potential academic success.

Currently, two bills (SB 526 by Senator Thompson and HB 387 co-sponsored by Representatives Rangel and Campbell) have been introduced this legislative session to reverse the proposed changes to the Bright Futures Scholarship program. It is in the best interest of the students of Miami-Dade County and the State of Florida that this legislation receives the support of the Florida Legislature.

**RECOMMENDED:** That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, amend its adopted state legislative platform to include support for reversing the increased minimum eligibility criteria necessary to qualify for the Bright Futures Scholarship scheduled to take effect July 1, 2013.