

Dr. Steve Gallon III, Board Member

**SUBJECT: PROVISION OF MEALS FOR CHILDREN DURING MANDATED
EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSURES**

**COMMITTEE: INNOVATION, GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS AND COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT**

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

Hurricane Irma was one of the strongest and most devastating hurricanes since *Hurricane Dean* in 2007 in terms of maximum sustained winds. It was one of the strongest and most intense to strike the United States since *Hurricane Katrina* in 2005. More critically, it was the first major hurricane to make landfall in Florida since *Hurricane Wilma* in 2005. In fact, in the U.S., state of emergencies were declared in Florida, Georgia, and North and South Carolina. As Miami-Dade County and throughout the world would witness, Hurricane Irma would cause widespread and catastrophic damage throughout its lifetime, particularly in parts of the Caribbean and the Florida Keys.

As a part of the pre-hurricane preparation and evacuation process, Miami-Dade County Public Schools played a crucial role in not only the provision of forty-four (44) facilities to serve as evacuation shelters to more than 30,000 displaced residents seeking refuge, but in the leadership of its superintendent, district staff, principals and school administrators, food service workers, custodians, bus drivers, and numerous employees who committed time, energy, and efforts to ensuring the safety and security of those in one of the shelters. Their willingness to lead, render service, and unselfishly support those in need, were commendable and merit this community's deepest gratitude.

Although the pre-hurricane preparation and evacuation process was deemed successful, it was the post-hurricane impact that would continue to take a toll in Miami-Dade County and throughout Florida. *Hurricane Irma* left almost 4.4 million homes and businesses in Florida without power and at least fifty people were killed in her wake in Florida alone. Of those, eleven fatalities were a result of intense heat due to lost air conditioning because of the hurricane at a Hollywood, Florida nursing home. Also, during the aftermath, Miami-Dade County had nearly 400,000 children out of school due to mandatory school closures first ordered by the Governor in anticipation of the storm and later required due to the conditions resulting thereafter.

Nearly seventy-percent of these school-aged children in M-DCPS were poor as evidenced by their qualification for free/reduced breakfast and lunch. For such low-income families, schools can be about more than just learning. Schools provide free or reduced-cost meals to many poor children and low-income families which can be an important income support for the family and a critical source of healthy food for the children.

Hurricane Irma caused significant economic and personal hardships on individuals, children, and families across Miami-Dade County. These hardships were significantly exacerbated among individuals, children, and families living in poverty and who were already facing such economic and personal hardships before the storm. When such storms such as *Hurricane Irma* hit communities of poverty, they become threat multipliers to the economic and social conditions of the residents.

M-DCPS adopts and implements policies governing Emergency Closure of Schools, Critical Incidence/Emergency Response, and Free and Reduced Meals. Each of these policies and related guidelines should provide both a plan and set of protocols for pre-hurricane preparation and related processes, as well as procedures for schools and district offices in the event of a state and/or district mandated closure of schools.

In these instances, M-DCPS, as the nation's 4th largest school district, is best positioned in terms of experience, expertise, and operational infrastructure to lead and facilitate meal distributions for our students in time of catastrophe and crisis. Thus, in the interest and welfare of our students, this item requests the review and/or establishment of plans, protocols, partnerships, and procedures for the distribution of meals to students by the District when a mandatory school closure has been imposed.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. STEVE GALLON III:**

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

1. Review School Board Policies governing Emergency Closure of Schools (8420), Critical Incidence/Emergency Response (8410), and Free and Reduced Meals (8531) and their applicability to pre/post-hurricane plans, protocols, and procedures;
2. Examine, in consultation with the School Board Attorney's Office, all legalities and related liabilities governing M-DCPS' role in the provision and distribution of meals to students during a state and/or district mandated emergency school closure;
3. Develop a plan, where legally practical and permissible, and with the input of district and school food service staff, to provide and distribute meals to students during a state and/or district mandated emergency school closure;
4. Identify potential corporate and community-based partners and collaborators to include in plans, protocols, and procedures to provide and distribute meals to students during a state and/or district mandated emergency school closure;
5. Make recommendations for any newly proposed policies and/or changes to existing School Board Policy that may be required to adopt and implement plans, protocols, and procedures to provide and distribute meals to students during a state and/or district mandated emergency school closure; and
6. provide update to the Board no later than the Board Meeting of January 17, 2018 and which is to be included in any revisions and/or updates to the District' Critical Incident Response Plan (CIRP)/Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) for all schools and the District.