

Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, Board Member

SUBJECT: BOARD ENDORSEMENT OF THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA RECOGNIZING MAY 2017 AS HAITIAN HERITAGE MONTH

COMMITTEE: INNOVATION, GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: SAFE, HEALTHY, SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Haitian Heritage Month is a celebration in the United States of Haitian heritage and culture. It was first celebrated in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1998. Tele Kreyol, one of the Boston Haitian Access Television programs, celebrated the whole month of May with a series of programs on Haitian history, culture, and contributions to the world. The month-long celebration has continued with such activities as parades, flag raisings, and exhibits organized by Haitian-Americans United, Inc. (H.A.U.) in collaboration with several Haitian organizations in the New England area.

The Haitian community of Palm Beach County, Florida, which started the Heritage celebration in Florida in 2001, contributed greatly to make the Heritage Month first a statewide celebration, and then, a national one in the United States. Throughout the history of Haiti, May has been a month for commemorating Haitian culture, with Haitians across the globe celebrating their achievements and contributions. Among the dates in May that are important in Haitian history is May 18, 1803, when the official blue and red Haitian flag was created by Haitian leaders at the end of the Congress of Arcahaie.

The country of Haiti has a long and rich cultural history. On January 1, 1804, Haiti gained its independence from France to become the world's first Black republic and the second democracy after the United States. Haitians and their descendants have also made numerous contributions to politics, arts, sciences, and education. As many can attest, by way of experience or anecdote, our brothers and sisters of the Haitian Diaspora have been monumental with respect to their impact in our community and in our schools for several decades. We as Miami-Dade County Public Schools have been privileged to have outstanding teachers, staff, principals, and administrators, and students who are of Haitian descent.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools provides students with many programs that emphasize multicultural education, positive inter-group relations, and cultural sensitivity as a way to promote understanding and harmony among people of all cultures. Haitian Heritage Month provides our diverse community an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the many historic, cultural, social, and economic contributions of Haitians to the United States and the world. The observance will allow students, their families, and the community to share and demonstrate pride in Haitian culture and history.

In a time where our Haitian brothers and sisters face incredible uncertainty because of certain policies, we as a district must stand united with them. This district has a history supporting our Haitian brothers and sisters through the many challenges they have faced, be it political, environment, or other. It is my hope that as we recognize May as Haitian Heritage Month, we will continue in our steadfast support of our Haitian brothers and sisters and provide them with the resources they need for a better living.

This item has been reviewed and approved by the School Board Attorney's office as to form and legal sufficiency.

There is good cause to vary from the published agenda because the May Board agenda is the last opportunity for the Board to formally recognize May as Haitian Heritage month.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. DOROTHY BENDROSS-MINDINGALL:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida endorse May 2017 as Haitian Heritage Month and authorize administrative actions to foster related activities.