

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
Board Meeting of July 12, 2017

July 11, 2017

Office of the Superintendent
Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: REQUEST THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, SUPPORT LEGISLATION AND/OR REGULATIONS THAT PROVIDE FOR A HIGHER DEGREE OF SCRUTINY BY THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE RELATED TO ENTITIES THAT ARE APPROVED TO COORDINATE STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAMS AS WELL AS TO ENHANCE BACKGROUND SCREENINGS OF HOST FAMILIES TO INCLUDE FINGERPRINT-BASED CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS

**LINK TO STRATEGIC
BLUEPRINT:**

**SAFE, HEALTHY AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING
ENVIRONMENT**

Recently, our community was shocked to learn minors who had traveled to South Florida as part of a foreign student exchange program may have been victimized by members of their "host families." The Miami Herald reported that according to the California-based Committee for Safety of Foreign Exchange Students, the abuse of foreign exchange students in the U.S. is not as uncommon as the public might think.

Currently, there is no specific requirement for what type of screening must be conducted of potential host families charged with the care and housing of foreign students between the ages of 15 and 18, who often arrive to this country speaking very little English. Further, while the Department of Homeland Security indicates they monitor the groups and companies that provide foreign exchange services, they are limited to the enforcement of existing federal regulations which do not include universal criminal background checks.

Given the vulnerability of the students participating in foreign exchange programs, it is imperative that every effort be made to ensure the safety of the environment in which they will be living. Therefore, as in Florida where any personnel and/or contractors who work with or around children must be vetted through a fingerprint-based state and federal criminal background history, the same or similar requirements should be applied to individuals that seek the approval to accept foreign children into their homes.

To that end, this item requests that the School Board modify its Federal Legislative Program to support legislation and/or other federal policy that mandates stricter scrutiny of groups and companies which arrange foreign exchange programs, as well as mandatory fingerprint-based criminal background screening for host families.

Good Cause

A-2

This item does not appear in the regularly published agenda. There is good cause to vary from the published agenda because information related to the lack of uniform criminal background screening was brought to light after the publication of the regular agenda.

RECOMMENDED: That the School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, support legislation and/or regulations that provide for a higher degree of scrutiny by the United States Department of State related to entities that are approved to coordinate student exchange programs, as well as to enhance background screenings of host families to include fingerprint-based criminal background checks.