

Ms. Perla Tabares Hantman, Chair

Co-Sponsors:      Dr. Martin Karp, Vice Chair  
                            Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall  
                            Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman  
                            Dr. Steve Gallon III  
                            Dr. Marta Pérez  
                            Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas

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**SUBJECT:            ENCOURAGE THE SUPERINTENDENT TO UTILIZE THE DISTRICT'S COMMUNICATION RESOURCES TO RAISE COMMUNITY AWARENESS OF THE RECENT LEGISLATIVE ACTION BANNING TEXTING WHILE DRIVING AND TO HIGHLIGHT ITS IMPACT ON DESIGNATED SCHOOL ZONES AND CROSSINGS**

**COMMITTEE:        ACADEMICS, INNOVATION, EVALUATION & TECHNOLOGY**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC**

**BLUEPRINT:        SAFE, HEALTHY AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

The safety and security of our students, teachers, and staff is of utmost importance to Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Since 2011, Miami-Dade County Public Schools has partnered annually with the Florida Department of Transportation's Put It Down Campaign. The campaign's message, "Put It Down, It Can Wait" is intended to deter drivers from distracted driving, including the use of communication devices, while operating motor vehicles. The campaign was initiated as a means to communicate the dangers of distracted driving while operating a vehicle.

In 2013, the Florida Legislature passed Senate Bill 52 ("SB 52") making texting while driving a secondary traffic offense in the State of Florida. On May 28, 2013, former Governor Rick Scott signed SB 52 into law during a signing ceremony held at Alonzo and Tracy Mourning Senior High School in Miami-Dade County. As a long-standing proponent of student safety initiatives, School Board Chair Perla Tabares Hantman attended the signing ceremony, highlighting the new law's significance to our teenage students. With this action, Florida joined the majority of states in the nation enacting laws aimed to curb the usage of cell phones while operating a vehicle. Advocates for safe driving in Florida celebrated the 2013 law as a good first step in making our roads safer. However, it was acknowledged that classifying texting while driving as only a secondary offense did not provide the new law with enough strength to deter drivers from engaging in this dangerous activity.

During the 2019 legislative session, in an effort to strengthen the 2013 law, the Florida Legislature passed House Bill 107 and Senate Bill 76 aimed to make texting while driving throughout Florida a primary offense, meaning that an officer can stop and issue a citation to a driver on the sole grounds of the driver being observed texting while driving. On May 17, 2019, Governor Ron DeSantis signed CS/HB 107 into law. Effective October 1, 2019, all kinds of texting while driving will be prohibited in the State of Florida.

Furthermore, the new law is more restrictive with respect to school areas as it prohibits, with certain exceptions, the use and/or holding of handheld devices while operating a vehicle in school zones and school crossing areas, even if the device is not being used for texting. The term wireless communication device includes, but is not limited to, a cell phone, a tablet, a laptop, a two-way messaging device, or an electronic game that is used or capable of being used in a handheld manner. Hands-free use of cell phones, using a cell phone without holding it, would remain permitted.

Due to the impact of this law, it is in the best interest of our community to use our School District's communication resources to bring awareness of the pending change in the law.

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

**ACTION PROPOSED BY CHAIR**

**PERLA TABARES HANTMAN:** That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, encourage the Superintendent to utilize the District's communication resources to raise community awareness of the recent legislative action banning texting while driving and to highlight its impact on designated school zones and crossings.