

Ms. Susie V. Castillo, Board Member

**SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION NO. 20-019 OF THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, SUPPORTING U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES BILL 4194 AND U.S. SENATE BILL 2661: THE NATIONAL SUICIDE HOTLINE DESIGNATION ACT**

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

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

At Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) the health and wellbeing of our students is one of our top priorities. An infectious disease outbreak such as COVID-19 may lead to isolation and depression and too often escalates into severe emotional distress and anxiety. The mental health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are profound and there are suggestions that suicide rates are rising. It is likely as the pandemic continues, suicides will become a more pressing concern causing longer-term effects on the general population, the economy, and on vulnerable groups. Preventing suicide therefore needs urgent consideration.

To slow the spread of COVID-19, on March 16<sup>th</sup> Miami Dade County Public Schools began distance learning for all students, closing our school sites, and placing us all in social isolation. This sudden disruption to school routines is taking a toll on our students' social-emotional wellbeing. Children of all ages are experiencing increased stress and loneliness because of the required isolation. They remain home away from their teachers and friends. It has been well documented that suicidal thoughts have been associated with social isolation and loneliness.

As distance learning continues, parents are also adjusting to newfound roles; those of a teacher and of a parent on the frontline for supporting their children with mental-health issues including the risk for suicide. It may be hard to distinguish between a child who is really struggling and one who is having a normal reaction to this COVID-19 pandemic. Talking about these issues can be difficult for children and their parents. These are just a few reasons why supporting the establishing of an easy-to-remember Hotline would give both children and adults easy access to the National Suicide Hotline which is available 24/7.

Both U.S. House Bill 4194 titled the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act, and U.S. Senate Bill 2661 titled the 9-8-8 Suicide Hotline Bill would designate 9-8-8 as the three-digit number for a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline, ensuring an easy-to-remember number for those in crisis to call for help. These bills are more than just smart policy that will save lives, they are also bipartisan statements by our government recognizing our country's mental health crisis and addressing it across party lines.

**Good Cause  
H-11**

Senate Bill 2661 would also authorize states to collect fees aimed at ensuring local crisis centers will be able to support increased volume, and it also would direct government health agencies to submit a report to Congress detailing strategies of how to better support people at risk for suicide including but not limited to LGBTQ youth and minorities who are at higher risk for suicide. The monies also go to the call centers as well as include funding for a public awareness campaign. The Bill goes next to the House of Representatives and then to the President for signature. It is thereby requested that the School Board approve Resolution No. 20-019.

This item does not appear in the regularly published agenda. There is good cause to vary from the published agenda because of the urgent and significant nature.

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

**ACTION PROPOSED BY  
MS. SUSIE V. CASTILLO:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve Resolution No. 20-019 of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, supporting U.S. House of Representatives Bill 4194 and U.S. Senate Bill 2661: The National Suicide Hotline Designation Act.

**RESOLUTION NO. 20-019  
OF THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, REQUEST THE  
APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION NO. 20-019 SUPPORTING U.S. HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES BILL 4194 AND U.S. SENATE BILL 2661:  
THE NATIONAL SUICIDE HOTLINE DESIGNATION ACT**

**WHEREAS**, At Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) the health and wellbeing of our students is one of our top priorities especially during the COVID-19 pandemic which may lead to isolation and depression that often escalates into severe emotional distress and anxiety including suicide; and

**WHEREAS**, The sudden disruption to school routines and daily schedules caused by COVID-19 is taking a toll on our students' social-emotional wellbeing and has triggered increased stress and loneliness because of the required isolation; all factors that may lead to suicide; and

**WHEREAS**, M-DCPS supports the passage of House Bill 4194 titled the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act, and U.S. Senate Bill 2661 titled the 9-8-8 Suicide Hotline Bill that would designate 9-8-8 as the three-digit number for a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline, ensuring an easy-to-remember number for those in crisis to call for help; and

**WHEREAS**, These bills represent bipartisan policies that will save lives and that recognize our country's mental health crisis and the need to address it across party lines; and

**WHEREAS**, Senate Bill 2661 would also authorize states to collect fees aimed at ensuring local crisis centers will be able to support increased call volume and would direct government health agencies to submit a report to Congress detailing strategies of how to better support people at risk for suicide including but not limited to LGBTQ youth and minorities who are at higher risk for suicide.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:**

The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve Resolution No. 20-019 of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, supporting the passage of United States House Bill 4194 and Senate Bill 2661 designating 9-8-8 as the national suicide crisis hotline.

A copy of this resolution is placed in the permanent records of this Board.

**Presented this twentieth day of May, A.D. 2020**

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

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CHAIR

ATTEST:

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Secretary