

Ms. Lucia Baez-Geller, Board Member

**SUBJECT: RECOGNIZING WORLD HEARING DAY ON MARCH 3, 2022, AND IMPLEMENTING A PILOT PROGRAM FOR HIGHER-DECIBEL HEARING TESTS IN SCHOOLS**

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

**LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN: SAFE, HEALTHY, & SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) hearing loss is the third most common chronic physical condition in the United States and is twice as prevalent as diabetes or cancer. There are approximately 40 million individuals in the United States who have been identified as having hearing loss, ten million of these hearing losses are attributed to noise-induced hearing loss. Noise-Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) is the only type of hearing loss that is completely preventable. The American Academy of Audiology (AAA) estimates that one in eight children has sustained NIHL and 16% of teenagers have sustained NIHL due to prolonged exposure to personal listening devices (PLDs).

Early preventative measures, hearing testing, and education regarding avoidance and adjusting noise in adolescents are helpful to overall ear health in the future. At Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), there are mandated school health screenings for students in kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> grade, and 6<sup>th</sup> grade. However, the screenings that the district offers are not at a high enough frequency to detect NIHL. If the district conducts hearing screenings at a higher frequency of 6,000 Hz, this could potentially detect and possibly prevent NIHL in thousands of students at an early age.

World Hearing Day, which is observed on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, is an initiative focused on education, testing and prevention of Noise-Induced Hearing Loss. The day sheds light on the nature of the hearing impaired and how the global community can play its part. The campaign is held each year by the Office of Prevention of Blindness and Deafness of the World Health Organization (WHO). This year, the theme for World Hearing Day is, "To hear for life, listen with care!" This will focus on the importance of safe listening as a means of maintaining good hearing, while also stressing the importance of mitigating exposure to loud sounds. On World Hearing Day, M-DCPS students, teachers and families would benefit from an informational campaign that incorporates facts about NIHL and the resources available to address the problem.

This item seeks to bring awareness to Noise-Induced Hearing Loss by recognizing March 3, 2022, as World Hearing Day, as well as establishing a districtwide campaign to maximize education and prevention efforts. It also directs the Superintendent to explore the feasibility of implementing a pilot program for higher frequency hearing screenings at the start of 6<sup>th</sup> grade and use the data as a baseline for future decision-making.

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

**ACTION PROPOSED BY  
MS. LUCIA BAEZ-GELLER:**

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

- a. explore the feasibility of conducting an informational campaign throughout Miami-Dade County Public Schools on World Hearing Day, focusing on preventative measures, educational efforts, and district and community resources available to students, teachers and families;
- b. explore the feasibility of establishing a pilot program of using higher frequency hearing screenings in 6<sup>th</sup> grade;
- c. using the data from this higher frequency screening as a baseline for future decision-making; and
- d. provide an update no later than the Academics, Innovation, Evaluation and Technology (AIET) Committee Meeting of April 6, 2022.