

Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Board Member

SUBJECT: DISTRICTWIDE SAFETY AND SECURITY COMMITTEE REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (M-DCPS) SAFETY AND SECURITY PROTOCOLS, PROCEDURES, AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES; AND ESTABLISHMENT OF A SUB-COMMITTEE WITHIN THE DISTRICTWIDE SAFETY AND SECURITY COMMITTEE TO MONITOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND ACTIONS OF THE MARJORY STONEMAN DOUGLAS HIGH SCHOOL PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

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

The concept of accountability has always been debated; however, it is a fact that accountability begins at the very top of any organization, regardless of whether it is a private or public entity. The School Board and the Superintendent of Schools, together, have an obligation to lead under the most challenging times and must ensure that all School Board policies, established laws, and best practices are not only implemented, but monitored, evaluated, and if necessary, make appropriate changes to ensure success.

After the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Senior High School tragedy on February 14, 2018, a number of actions have been taken including those that were enacted by the Florida Legislature and are now law. School districts throughout the state have actively involved stakeholders and implemented policies and procedures to ensure that our schools are safe, our students are engaged in knowing what to do in the event of an active shooter, and several mental health programs and resources have been developed and implemented.

In 2018, the Florida Legislature also established the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission within the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. The legislation represented a comprehensive approach to identifying issues presented by the tragedy that happened at the school. The Commission finalized a 99-page draft report of recommendations which summarized a number of proposals for consideration. The School Board unanimously approved Agenda Item H-9, proffered by School Board Member Mari Tere Rojas, at its meeting of December 19, 2018, which authorized the Superintendent of Schools to establish a safety and security task force to review the findings of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission Initial Report. It furthered directed to present the findings, recommendations, and possible solutions identified by the task force to the Board by April 15, 2019; and a staff follow-up memorandum summarizing the findings was submitted by the Superintendent on April 15, 2019. Furthermore, it must be noted that during the 2022 Legislative Session, House Bill (HB) 1421 – *School Safety*, codified most of the remaining recommendations from the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Commission (MSDC), and extended the MSDC's sunset date by three years, until July 1, 2026.

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Additionally, in accordance with Section(s) 1006.07(4), Florida Statutes (F.S), starting with the 2021-2022 school year, Florida public schools, including charters, must implement a mobile panic alert system capable of connecting various emergency services technologies to safeguard real-time coordination between multiple first responder agencies. Such system, known as *Alyssa's Alert*, must integrate with local public safety answering point infrastructure to communicate 911 calls and mobile activations.

The recent shooting on May 24, 2022, at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, has once again, raised more questions regarding what could have been done to prevent such a horrific event. It is more than how a school building can be secured. A key element of school safety is ensuring mental health and behavior issues are properly addressed. In Florida, Senate Bill 7026 authorized by the 2018 Florida Legislature, comprehensively addressed the establishment of the Mental Health Assistance Allocation which afforded funding to assist school districts in establishing or expanding school-based mental health care. In response to this legislation, M-DCPS established the Department of Mental Health Services at the School Board meeting of July 25, 2018, Agenda Item D-24 Revised.

Much of the anguish among teenagers and young adults has been inwardly directed, with skyrocketing rates of self-harm and suicide. In that sense, the perpetrators of mass shootings symbolize a small group of young people, but one that nonetheless represents broader trends of loneliness, hopelessness, and the darker side of a culture overwhelmed by social media and violent content. The shooter at Marjory Stoneman Douglas Senior High School and at Robb Elementary School appeared to present a number of mental health issues and social media posting that went undetected and unanswered. Both of these horrific incidents may have been avoided if proper assessment, monitoring, care, and follow up services had been implemented.

The School Board has been engaged in enacting policy and ensuring that all safety and security procedures are successfully implemented. Some of these have included action agenda items regarding immediate response to an active assailant incident; the designation of safe spaces in M-DCPS classrooms; safety and security emergency operating procedures; the application of limited school entry points; the stop the bleed training program; monitoring social media threats; security and safety provisions, protocols, and procedures for School Board related events and activities; among others. The establishment of a districtwide safety and security committee was unanimously approved by the Board on February 15, 2017, Agenda Item H-8.

Moreover, a number of very notable safety and security measures have been implemented by the administration, and the voters of Miami-Dade County overwhelmingly approved in 2018 the referendum which further supported and enhanced school safety and security.

The Superintendent of Schools and the entire workforce of the Miami-Dade Schools Police are to be commended for their outstanding commitment to law enforcement and to the safety and security of M-DCPS students and the workforce. As recent as May 25, 2022, the Superintendent submitted a memorandum to the Board, delineating the District's protocols to be shared with families, as well as available resources to students and parents regarding the Uvalde massacre.

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

ACTION PROPOSED BY

MS. MARIA TERESA ROJAS: That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent of Schools to:

1. expand the duties of the M-DCPS Districtwide Safety and Security Committee, established by Board action on February 15, 2017, to further review and evaluate current school safety and security protocols, procedures, and training, including social media postings; the implementation of *Alysa's Alert*; and conduct an in-depth examination of recent school shootings;
2. establish a sub-committee within the M-DCPS Districtwide Safety and Security Committee, to monitor the development and actions taken by the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission;
3. include all available and public data for mental health services, regarding student assessment, program implementation, qualifications of mental health staff and providers, and any recommended enhanced actions to be considered;
4. appoint additional staff members, law enforcement agents, mental health providers and field experts to the M-DCPS Districtwide Safety and Security Committee, as appropriate and needed; and
5. report the findings and recommendations of the M-DCPS Districtwide Safety and Security Committee, including the sub-committee update, to the School Board at the February 2023 Personnel, Student, School & Community Support School Board Committee Meeting.