

Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Board Member

**SUBJECT: PROPOSED MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (M-DCPS)  
2023 STATE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM PRIORITY - DEFERRED  
RETIREMENT OPTION PROGRAM (DROP)**

**COMMITTEE: FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC  
PLAN: HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TEACHERS, LEADERS, & STAFF**

Florida's Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP) provides public employees who are eligible to participate in the Florida Retirement System (FRS) Pension Plan with an alternative method for payment of retirement benefits earned for a specified and limited period of time delaying the employment termination for up to 60 months from the date the DROP participation begins. Under this pension plan, a retiree stops earning service credit toward a future benefit and the retirement benefit is calculated at the time the DROP participation begins. While in DROP, a retiree continues earning a salary from the employer while monthly retirement benefits are held in the FRS Trust Fund. When a retiree ends the DROP participation period, the DROP earned benefits are paid out and monthly retirement benefits begin.

There are certain provisions that the State has authorized for specified K-12 instructional personnel to extend DROP participation for an additional 36 months depending on when the 60-month DROP participation ends. Furthermore, a law enforcement officer may extend the DROP participation up to 36 additional months beyond the initial 60-month period. Certain administrative personnel may also be authorized by their employer to extend participation in DROP through the last day of the school year if their original DROP termination date occurs before the end of that school year.

A recent report from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) titled *U. S. Schools Report Increased Teacher Vacancies Due to COVID-19 Pandemic, March 3, 2022*, identifies resignations and retirements as leading causes for unfilled positions in the nation's public schools. Some of the key findings include:

- "Forty-four percent of public schools reported having at least one teaching vacancy as of January 2022. Of schools reporting at least one vacancy, special education was identified as the teaching position with the most vacancies, with 45 percent of schools reporting this vacancy. General elementary and substitute teachers were reported as vacant by 31 percent and 20 percent of schools, respectively."
- "Forty-nine percent of public schools reported having at least one non-teaching staff vacancy as of January 2022. Of schools reporting at least one vacancy, custodial staff was identified as the staff position with the most vacancies with 28 percent of schools reporting this vacancy. Transportation staff and nutrition staff positions were each reported as vacant by 14 percent of schools."

- “For public schools who reported having either a teaching or staff vacancy, over 50 percent of vacancies were due to resignation. Additionally, to cover staffing vacancies, over half of these schools reported the increased need to use school staff outside of their intended duties.”
- “Sixty-one percent of public schools that reported having at least one vacancy specifically identified the COVID-19 pandemic as a cause of increased teaching and non-teaching staff vacancies.”

The U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) *Occupational Outlook Handbook – Elementary, Middle, and High School Principals*, April 18, 2022, reports that “the employment of elementary, middle, and high school principals is projected to grow eight (8) percent through 2030. About 22,100 openings for elementary, middle, and high school principals are projected each year, on average, over the decade. Many of those openings are expected to result from the need to replace workers who transfer to different occupations or exit the labor force, such as to retire.” The BLS has further reported that “the demand for special education teachers is expected to rise faster than average occupations.”

The current and future job market for instructional, non-instructional, and administrative personnel may reach a critical crisis if the District does not take any and all appropriate actions to retain qualified and experienced employees. Therefore, this agenda item seeks the Board’s approval to include in the M-DCPS 2023 State Legislative Program Priority the extension of DROP participation for an additional 36 months to all public school retirees upon the end of the 60-month DROP participation. Furthermore, it also requests the approval to include in the 2023 State Legislative Program for public school DROP participants to be able to be rehired 30 calendar days after the end of the DROP participation. A similar priority issue is included in the proposed 2023 legislative program of the Greater Florida Consortium of School Boards, adopted by the Board at the October 19, 2022, meeting, Agenda Item H-20 proffered by Vice Chair Dr. Steve Gallon III, which states “*Minimize the vacancy crisis without the need for any additional monetary commitment by waiving or shortening the existing reemployment limitations for retirees and adjusting the DROP extension program.*”

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, direct the Superintendent of Schools to include in the Board’s M-DCPS 2023 State Legislative Program Priority a request for the extension of DROP participation for an additional 36 months to all public school retirees upon the end of the 60-month DROP participation; and to also request the approval to include public school DROP participants to be able to be rehired 30 calendar days after the end of the DROP participation.