

Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Chair

SUBJECT: REQUEST APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION NO. 23-004 OF THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, RECOGNIZING MS. REBECA SOSA, FORMER MIAMI-DADE COUNTY COMMISSIONER REPRESENTING DISTRICT 6 AND RETIRED MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (M-DCPS) EDUCATOR

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL, & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN: INFORMED, ENGAGED, & EMPOWERED STAKEHOLDERS

Ms. Rebeca Sosa served on the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners representing District 6 from June 2001 to November 2022. She was re-elected five times and in 2018 received a resounding 76.40% of the vote in her favor. In District 6, she represented the residents of the City of Miami, Coral Gables, West Miami, Hialeah, Miami Springs, Virginia Gardens, and the unincorporated communities of Schenley Park, Coral Villas, Red Bird, Coral Terrace, Little Gables, Waterways, Fontainebleau, and Glenvar Heights.

On Nov. 20, 2012, she was elected by her colleagues as the first Hispanic female Chairwoman of the County Commission where she served a two-year term. During her tenure as chairwoman, Commissioner Sosa made it a priority to bring government closer to the people and led the effort to hold a County Commission meeting in South Dade at the South Miami-Dade Cultural Arts Center.

The Miami Herald Editorial Board had the following assessment of Commissioner Sosa's tenure as Chairwoman: "We give a tip of the hat to Rebeca Sosa, who is ending her stint as chair. She did an excellent job as the commission leader, seeking harmony and bringing decorum and order to board meetings, which in the past had lapsed into late-night imbroglios. Ms. Sosa led with a firm but friendly hand. She was the epitome of kindness to even the most troublesome public speaker who came in front of the commission. She was never anything but courteous and cognizant that the commission serves at the pleasure of the residents of Miami-Dade. Job well done, Ms. Sosa."

As Chairwoman, Commissioner Sosa placed environmental concerns at the forefront to challenge and confront the issue of sea level rise. Through her leadership, a Sea Level Rise Taskforce was created, and their recommendations were proffered to the Board of County Commissioners for adoption. These recommendations form the foundation for Miami-Dade's response to sea level rise. Furthermore, Commissioner Sosa spearheaded the County's efforts to address the issues affecting Biscayne Bay by forming the Biscayne Bay Task Force and sponsoring their recommendations.

Prior to joining Miami-Dade County, Commissioner Sosa served as Commissioner of the City of West Miami in 1990 and then as Mayor from 1994 to 2001 where her leadership resulted in the city's recovery from a 52 percent budget deficit, thus removing it from the Governor's Emergency List. During her tenure, she was able to secure more than \$5 million in grants for the City for capital improvement projects as well as improvements to its drainage and parks systems.

During her leadership tenure in the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners, Commissioner Sosa successfully organized and led a number of initiatives that benefitted the citizens of Miami-Dade County. Some of these include the following:

- Championed the Port of Miami, often serving as the Chair of the committee with oversight of the port, and filing legislation supporting its expansion, including new terminals and initiatives that have helped it become the Cruise Capital of the World.
- Appointed and served as a member of the South Florida Regional Planning Council, whose mission is to identify the long-term challenges and opportunities facing Southeast Florida and assist the region's leaders in developing and implementing creative strategies that result in more prosperous and equitable communities, a healthier and cleaner environment, and a more vibrant economy.
- Presented checks totaling \$6.151 million from the District 6 General Obligation Bonds toward the construction of multi-purpose facilities in the cities of Miami, Miami Springs, West Miami, and Hialeah.
- Led in the prevention of elder abuse and neglect, sponsoring a resolution authorizing the County Manager to form what would become the Elder Abuse Task Force to make recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners on issues addressing the detection and prevention of elder abuse and/or neglect in assisted living facilities, nursing homes, convalescent homes, or other facilities that house or care for the elderly in Miami-Dade County.
- Sponsored numerous resolutions to protect our community's children and vulnerable population against human trafficking and exploitation. She authored an initiative to place human trafficking awareness signs at county facilities, promoted the Stop Child Sex Trafficking campaign, and moved to ban drones over parks and schools where children congregate.
- Worked to make our community more inclusive for persons with disabilities, by sponsoring legislation declaring Miami-Dade County's commitment to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, supporting the use of a Wallet Card for persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and urging federal and state government for increased funding for autism research,
- Established designated parking for veterans in county facilities. Advocated for safer crosswalks for the visually impaired.
- Led the initiative to give our senior citizens more input in local government by creating the Elder Affairs Advisory Board.
- Spearheaded the Be Bold, Be Gold Campaign to help raise funds for childhood cancer research.
- Moved to ban red light cameras in the unincorporated areas of Miami-Dade County.
- Championed stricter regulations for texting while driving, advocated for enforcing it as a primary offense and supported educational campaigns to raise awareness of the dangers associated with this activity.
- Led the effort to protect our trees and environment from future hurricanes and tropical storms by filing legislation reviewing County policy on protecting the tree canopy and planting the right tree in the right place.
- Supported our community's small businesses through the Mom-and-Pop Small Business Grant Program. Since 1997, the grant has helped stimulate a partnership between the public and private sectors as well as build financially stable communities in urban areas.
- Sponsored legislation supporting the USA, Canada, and Mexico bid to host the 2026 World Cup and bring matches to Miami-Dade County.
- Strengthened Miami-Dade County's Ethics Ordinance.
- Advocated for fair pay for women.

Honors and special recognitions awarded to Commissioner Sosa:

- The prestigious Dan Beard Government Service Award by the Tropical Audubon Society for taking decisive action to protect quality of life and anticipate the impacts of sea level rise.
- The CLEO Institute for her lifelong work in protecting our environment. The CLEO Institute is an organization that aims to raise awareness for environmental related initiatives and has inducted Commissioner Sosa into their leadership circle.
- Recognized in Congress for serving the community with distinction during Women's History Month by Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart and received a tribute in the Senate by Senator Rick Scott.
- Presented in Washington D.C. with the Anna Maria Arias Congressional Trailblazer Award in recognition for Outstanding Leadership in Public Service.

Commissioner Sosa was born in Camaguey, Cuba. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Secondary Education from the University of Puerto Rico and a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Biscayne College. She holds instructional certifications in the State of Florida in both in elementary education and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Commissioner Sosa has been an educator for more than 40 years and recently retired from Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY CHAIR
MS. MARIA TERESA ROJAS:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve Resolution No. 23-004 of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, recognizing Ms. Rebeca Sosa, former Miami-Dade County Commissioner representing District 6, and retired Miami-Dade County Public Schools educator.

**RESOLUTION NO. 23-004 OF THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA,
RECOGNIZING FORMER MIAMI-DADE COUNTY COMMISSIONER REPRESENTING
DISTRICT 6 AND RETIRED MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC
SCHOOLS (M-DCPS) EDUCATOR**

WHEREAS, Ms. Rebeca Sosa served on the Miami-Dade County Commission representing District 6 from June 2001 to November 2022. In District 6, she represented the residents of the City of Miami, Coral Gables, West Miami, Hialeah, Miami Springs, Virginia Gardens, and the unincorporated communities of Schenley Park, Coral Villas, Red Bird, Coral Terrace, Little Gables, Waterways, Fontainebleau, and Glenvar Heights;

WHEREAS, on Nov. 20, 2012, she was elected by her colleagues as the first Hispanic female Chairwoman of the County Commission where she served a two-year term;

WHEREAS, as Chairwoman, Commissioner Sosa placed environmental concerns at the forefront to challenge and confront the issue of sea level rise. Furthermore, Commissioner Sosa spearheaded the County's efforts to address the issues affecting Biscayne Bay by forming the Biscayne Bay Task Force and sponsoring their recommendations.

WHEREAS, prior to joining Miami-Dade County, Commissioner Sosa served as Commissioner of the City of West Miami in 1990 and then as Mayor from 1994 to 2001;

WHEREAS, during her leadership tenure in the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners, Commissioner Sosa successfully organized and led a number of initiatives that benefitted the citizens of Miami-Dade County;

WHEREAS, Commissioner Sosa has received a number of honors, recognitions, and awards during her outstanding work as a public servant for the City of West Miami and Miami-Dade County;

WHEREAS, she received her Bachelor's Degree in Secondary Education from the University of Puerto Rico and a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Biscayne College. She holds instructional certifications in the State of Florida in both in elementary education and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL); and after more than 40 years as an educator, Ms. Sosa recently retired from Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve Resolution NO. 23-004 of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, recognizing Ms. Rebeca Sosa, former Miami-Dade County Commissioner representing District 6 and retired Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) educator.

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

Presented this eighteenth day of January, A. D. 2023

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

SCHOOL BOARD CHAIR

ATTEST:

Secretary