

Ms. Luisa Santos, Board Member

Co-Sponsors: Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Chair
 Ms. Monica Colucci, Vice Chair
 Mr. Roberto J. Alonso
 Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall
 Ms. Mary Blanco
 Mr. Danny Espino
 Dr. Steve Gallon III

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SUBJECT: UTILIZE INFLATION REDUCTION ACT REIMBURSEMENTS TO FUND SCHOOL FACILITIES UPGRADES AND REDUCE SCHOOL DISTRICT ENERGY BILLS

COMMITTEE: FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

**LINK TO STRATEGIC
PLAN: EFFECTIVE & SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONAL PRACTICES**

Miami-Dade County Public Schools is committed to continually enhancing facilities and cutting operational costs to focus the majority of our budget and resources on enriching student learning experiences. Our district's dedication to sustainability, resilience, and operational efficiency is evident in the numerous initiatives supported by the School Board, including:

- H-14 Miami-Dade County Public Schools Energy Cost Containment Program, School Board Chair Mari Tere Rojas (August 9, 2017);
- B-5 Request Approval of Resolution No. 19-054 of the School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, Recognizing the Marine and Science Technology Academy, Recipient of the 2019 U. S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School Award, School Board Chair Mari Tere Rojas (October 2, 2019);
- H-3 Elimination of Food Waste and the Exploration of Food Sharing Programs, School Board Member Dr. Steve Gallon III (April 17, 2019);
- H-3: Request Approval Of Resolution No. 21-010 Of The School Board Of Miami-Dade County, Florida, Endorsing Miami-Dade County Public Schools' Commitment To 100% Clean Energy By 2030, School Board Member Luisa Santos (April 21, 2021)
- H-9: Environmental Sustainability in all Miami Dade County Public Schools, School Board Member Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall (December 15, 2021)
- B-4: Request Approval Of Resolution No. 23-013 Of The School Board Of Miami-Dade County, Florida, Recognizing The Maritime And Science Technology Academy (MAST) For Being The First Florida High School To Receive The Gold Apple Environmental Award From The Florida Department Of Environmental Protection (FDEP), School Board Chair Mari Tere Rojas (March 15, 2023)
- H-9: Food Waste In Miami-Dade County Public Schools, School Board Member Luisa Santos (October 11, 2023)

- H-4: Request Approval To Explore The Feasibility Of Developing A Comprehensive Plan To Upgrade The District's Energy Efficiency Process, School Board Member Robert Alonso (March 13, 2024)

Our schools can only fulfill their educational mission when students and staff are provided with healthy and safe learning environments. Students spend over 15,000 hours inside school buildings on average by the time they graduate high school. Modifications to infrastructure, buildings, and vehicles can create healthier and safer learning environments.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, K-12 school districts spend nearly \$8 billion annually on energy, making it the second-largest expense after salaries.¹ In our district, we are facing a \$3 billion current cost estimate for deferred maintenance, which balloons to a \$4.5 billion 10-year trend, alongside rising utility rates.² In FY 2023-24, M-DCPS spent \$32,043,527.51 on water and sewer and \$74,974,350.89 on electricity. In the FY 2024-25 M-DCPS budget we are projecting costs of \$33,463,785 for water and sewer and \$89,851,801 for electricity.³ Rapid rate increases showcase the need to meet the efficiency goals stated in our Strategic Plan, Pillar 5 Priority 4, Objective 1: reduce energy usage by 15% and Objective 2: reduce water usage by 10%.

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022 provides public schools with an unprecedented opportunity to achieve these objectives. Through uncapped, noncompetitive funding, the IRA supports critical sustainability projects—including geothermal heat pumps, solar installations, battery storage, electric vehicles, and charging stations—by reimbursing a significant portion of associated costs.⁴ Leveraging these incentives will allow us to modernize facilities, continue purchasing electric buses, and upgrade energy systems, all of which will significantly reduce operational expenses while fostering healthier, safer, and more sustainable learning environments that enhance educational outcomes and staff retention.

As stewards of taxpayer funds, it is our duty to maximize the benefits for our students and community. By fully utilizing the IRA's resources, we can reduce operational costs, reinvest savings into educational programs, and further our commitment to fiscal responsibility and sustainability. The advantages are both immediate and long-term: clean energy installations will reduce expenses and operational impact, while schools powered by renewable energy can serve as emergency shelters, providing a broader benefit to the community.

¹ K-12 School Districts | Better Buildings Initiative. State and Local Solution Center K-12 Resource Hub. (n.d.). <https://betterbuildingsolutioncenter.energy.gov/sectors/k-12-school-districts>

² Miami Dade County Public Schools. (n.d.). (rep.). Facilities and Maintenance Comprehensive Update (October 9, 2024).

³ (2024, October 21). *Total Spend Water and Sewer FY 23-24*.

⁴ *Fact sheet: Inflation reduction act tax credits can fund school facilities upgrades and Reduce School District Energy Bills*. U.S. Department of the Treasury. (2024, January 4). <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy2016>

This item has been reviewed and approved by the Office of the General Counsel as to form and legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
MS. LUISA SANTOS:**

That the School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorizes the Superintendent to prioritize and take advantage of the Inflation Reduction Act funds by:

1. If necessary, procuring the professional services of tax professionals and legal experts to research, identify, analyze, and maximize applicable credits under the IRA, such as those for electric vehicles and energy-efficient installations;
2. Explore the feasibility of:
 - a. accessing IRA dollars in new school construction, renovation projects, replacement of end-of-life machines and vehicles, and proactively replacing machines and vehicles that are inefficient or that can contribute to unhealthy or more expensive school learning environments; and
 - b. reviewing project qualifications on an ongoing basis; and
 - c. if deemed necessary, update design criteria to maximize future funds available for facility improvements and energy efficiency; and
3. Report findings to the Board and a plan of action no later than January 31, 2025.