

Dr. Steve Gallon III, Board Member

Co-Sponsors: Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Chair
 Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall
 Ms. Mary Blanco
 Mr. Danny Espino
 Mr. Joseph S. Geller
 Ms. Luisa Santos

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SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES DURING GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

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

The Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) has long been a beacon of compassion and leadership—standing in the gap for students and families in times of crisis. Whether providing relief after hurricanes, supporting immigrant communities, or addressing local and national emergencies, the School Board, Superintendent, employees, and even students have repeatedly demonstrated that service, empathy, and humanity are fundamental to who we are as a district.

Today, while there is no hurricane or natural disaster, our community faces a crisis that is equally devastating in its impact on families—the ongoing federal government shutdown. The current stalemate in Washington, D.C., now entering Day 37, has resulted in the longest shutdown in U.S. history, surpassing the 35-day closure of 2019.

A government shutdown occurs when Congress fails to pass—or the President declines to sign—appropriation bills to fund government operations. Federal agencies must then suspend all non-essential operations, leaving millions of workers either furloughed without pay or required to work without compensation. The consequences ripple far beyond Washington: families lose income, bills go unpaid, pantries empty, and children feel the anxiety of uncertainty at home and school.

Nationally, more than 2.2 million federal employees and 1.3 million active-duty military members are directly affected by the shutdown, according to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). In Florida alone, approximately 95,000 federal workers and tens of thousands of contract employees are impacted, with many residing in South Florida.

For Miami-Dade County, this translates into thousands of parents and caregivers—Transportation Security Administration (TSA) screeners at Miami International Airport, U.S. Coast Guard personnel at Homestead Air Reserve Base, postal workers, and others—who are experiencing missed paychecks, mounting debt, and emotional strain. Many of their children attend our schools.

The human cost extends further. Families dependent on federal support programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), WIC, and Section 8 housing vouchers is facing delays and disruptions. Even the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has warned of delays in processing tax refunds—funds that many families rely on to meet annual financial obligations like rent, tuition, or medical expenses.

With respect to SNAP, there are over 3 million families dependent upon SNAP—with over 500,000 in Miami-Dade County alone. These families have children in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. In fact, South Florida is one of the most SNAP-dependent regions in the country. Of the United States' 10 largest metropolitan areas, greater Miami, stretching up through West Palm Beach, has the largest share of SNAP-recipient households — nearly 15%. Miami-Dade accounts for a major chunk of that. Nearly 22% of the county's households depend on SNAP to put food on the table, almost double the 12% national average.

Behind every statistic is a story: a cafeteria worker trying to stretch her last paycheck; a Coast Guard officer explaining to his children why they can't afford Christmas gifts; a high school student taking on extra shifts to help their family make ends meet. These are not abstractions—they are our students, our neighbors, and our community.

M-DCPS has always stood ready to lead with compassion. As South Florida's largest public institution and one of the nation's most diverse and inclusive school districts, we recognize both the moral and operational responsibility to respond.

At the January 16, 2019, School Board Meeting, the Board unanimously co-sponsored and approved Good Cause Item H-15 Revised, *Support for Students and Families During Government Shutdown*, sponsored by Dr. Steve Gallon III which called for similar support measures for families affected by economic disruptions. That precedent underscores our enduring commitment to safeguarding student well-being and ensuring that no child's learning suffers because of circumstances beyond their control.

The present government shutdown requires similar vigilance and action. M-DCPS must once again mobilize its partnerships, community resources, and school-based support to identify affected students, connect families to assistance, and mitigate any disruptions to learning or access to basic needs such as food, shelter, and transportation.

This item seeks to direct the Superintendent, in consultation with the General Counsel, to **assess and examine** the potential impact that the present government shutdown will have on the learning and lives of M-DCPS students and their families; **identify and establish partnerships** with local, state, and federal agencies, non-profits, and community organizations that can provide assistance, including food banks, housing programs, and emergency relief services; **provide timely information and guidance** to schools regarding resources and supports available for students and families directly impacted by the shutdown; **take additional steps**, as determined appropriate, to provide resources, support, and assistance to affected families, including counseling, emergency meal distribution, and utility assistance coordination; **develop and implement a contingency plan** that includes protocols, communication processes, and partnerships to be activated during future government shutdowns or similar economic disruptions that adversely affect the learning and well-being of M-DCPS students and their families; and **provide an update** to the School Board by **November 28, 2025**, detailing implemented actions, partnerships, and outcomes of the district's response efforts.

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

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. STEVE GALLON III:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, affirms its recognition of the potential adverse impact that the present government shutdown may have on its students and their families, and their commitment to provide additional support and assistance, where feasible and appropriate, and authorize the Superintendent to:

1. **assess and examine** the potential impact that the present government shutdown will have on the learning and lives of M-DCPS students and their families;
2. **identify and establish partnerships** with local, state, and federal agencies, non-profits, and community organizations that can provide assistance, including food banks, housing programs, and emergency relief services;
3. **provide timely information and guidance** to schools regarding resources and support available for students and families directly impacted by the shutdown;
4. **take additional steps**, as determined appropriate, to provide resources, support, and assistance to affected families, including counseling, emergency meal distribution, and utility assistance coordination;
5. **develop and implement a contingency plan** that includes protocols, communication processes, and partnerships to be activated during future government shutdowns or similar economic disruptions that adversely affect the learning and well-being of M-DCPS students and their families; and
6. **provide an update** to the School Board by **November 28, 2025**, detailing implemented actions, partnerships, and outcomes of the district's response efforts.