

Dr. Steve Gallon III, Board Member

**SUBJECT: APPROVE RESOLUTION 26-023 CALLING FOR A REFERENDUM RENEWAL TO BE HELD ON NOVEMBER 3, 2026, SEEKING APPROVAL FROM THE VOTERS OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY FOR THE SCHOOL BOARD TO LEVY AN AD VALOREM ASSESSMENT TO RENEW AND CONTINUE IMPROVING COMPENSATION FOR TEACHERS AND INSTRUCTIONAL PERSONNEL, AND IMPROVE STUDENT SAFETY AND SECURITY FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS, INCLUDING PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS, WITH OVERSIGHT BY A CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

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

Over the last decade, our school district has seen remarkable success. Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) remains one of the highest-performing urban school systems in the nation, with a graduation rate that now exceeds 95 percent.

In 2018, the School Board recognized the need to identify supplemental revenue sources to support instructional personnel and school safety in light of the challenges presented by Miami-Dade's high cost of living, underfunded statutory mandates, and other issues impacting school funding and teacher salaries in M-DCPS. As a result, on November 6, 2018, the voters of Miami-Dade were asked to invest in our community's future by investing in M-DCPS. Proposition #362, the *Secure Our Future Referendum (SOFR)*, was approved and subsequently renewed by voters on November 8, 2022.

The current 2022 referendum funds continue to be vital, with 88% supporting teacher salaries—ensuring they exceed the national average—and 12% enhancing school safety by providing an officer at every school site. M-DCPS has been able to maintain an average salary for teachers that is higher than our neighboring districts, all of which also benefit from operational ad valorem millage levies within their counties. However, these voter-approved funds are set to expire on June 30, 2027, necessitating a renewal to maintain these critical investments in our workforce and student security. When the

current referendum sunsets, the District to fiscally support “supplemented” compensation for teachers will also sunset, as will the ability to meet the requirement for a law enforcement officer to be on school premises from bell to bell, without impact to educational programs.

At the School Board meeting of February 11, 2026, the Board approved Agenda Item H-13, *Accomplishments of the Referendum Supporting Improved Teacher Compensation and School Safety and Related Recommendations*, proffered by School Board Member Dr. Steve Gallon III and unanimously co-sponsored by School Board Chair Ms. Mari Tere Rojas, School Board Vice Chair Ms. Monica Colucci, and School Board Members Mr. Roberto J. Alonso, Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, Ms. Mary Blanco, Mr. Danny Espino, Mr. Joseph S. Geller, and Ms. Luisa Santos. This agenda item requested that the School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, allow the electors of Miami-Dade County to express their continued support for teachers and their commitment to school safety through a vote on a referendum. This item also required, among other things, that the Superintendent consult with the District’s bargaining groups, parent groups and community groups about funding levels, review the expenditure of funds from the 2022 Referendum assessment of a 1.0 levy of ad valorem taxes to determine if the funds have been utilized for the purposes approved by the voters, analyze the levels and impact of the referendum funding, and make recommendations concerning the renewal of the referendum for the November 3, 2026, general election.

Pursuant to School Board Policy 9143, the Secure Our Future Advisory Committee (SOFAC), comprised of bargaining groups, parents, community stakeholders and business leaders, serves in an advisory and oversight capacity to review, monitor, and make recommendations regarding the use of referendum proceeds approved by voters in 2018 and 2022. In accordance with Item H-13, and Policy 9143, a SOFAC meeting was held on March 30, 2026, and the SOFAC approved the Committee’s most recent Annual Reports which monitor the use and distribution of proceeds generated from the voter-approved referendum supporting teacher compensation and school safety. The SOFAC reports confirm that referendum revenues were properly utilized in accordance with the stated goals of the 2022 Referendum and continue to represent a critical funding source supporting the District’s ability to maintain competitive compensation for instructional personnel and to sustain the levels of school safety personnel required under Florida law. The SOFAC reports further indicate that referendum funds provide Referendum Retirement Accruing Supplements (RRAS) to instructional personnel and safety personnel. These supplements are provided above base salary and are eligible for Florida Retirement System credit. The additional compensation has played a significant role in strengthening recruitment and retention of teachers and improving the District’s overall average teacher salary. In reviewing these reports, two primary funding considerations emerge. First, referendum funds continue to play a critical role in supplementing teacher compensation and maintaining competitive salary levels relative to other districts. Second, the cost of maintaining required levels of school safety personnel represents a substantial and ongoing financial obligation, which is currently sustained through referendum funding.

It is estimated that the Board may be able to raise \$585 million annually, at a cost of less than \$316 per year, or \$0.86 per day, to the typical homeowner with a levy of a one (1) mill of ad valorem taxes. The renewal will continue to include charter schools in the shared proceeds based on their proportional share of student enrollment, calculated on an unweighted basis, to ensure the continuation of current compensation as well as enhancing both safety and security.

Approval of this Resolution will place the renewal of the one (1) mill ad valorem tax on November 3, 2026, general election ballot. This renewal is essential to continue the progress made in teacher compensation and to ensure the ongoing safety of all public-school students, including those in charter schools, under the continued oversight of a Citizen Advisory Committee. District staff participated in a roundtable discussion with representatives from several charter school operators to collaboratively draft the proposed ballot language. Pursuant to § 1011.73, Florida Statutes, the renewal, if approved, would be for a period of four (4) years, from July 1, 2027, to June 30, 2031, or until changed by another millage election. Approved by The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida on this 22nd day of April, 2026.

This item has been reviewed and approved by the Office of the General Counsel as to form and legal sufficiency. This item does not appear on the published Agenda. There exists good cause to vary from the published Agenda because time is of the essence in order to meet applicable election deadlines.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY**

- DR. STEVE GALLON III** That the School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida,
1. Approve Resolution 26-023, calling for a referendum to be held on November 3, 2026, for the purpose of seeking approval from voters of Miami-Dade County for the School Board to levy an ad valorem assessment of one (1) mill to continue improving compensation for teachers and instructional personnel, and improve student safety and security for Miami-Dade County Public Schools, including public charter schools, with oversight by a citizen advisory committee; and
  2. In accordance with § 1011.73(2), Florida Statutes, direct the Miami-Dade County Commission to place the referendum on the November 3, 2026 general election ballot as authorized by Resolution 26-023; and
  3. Authorize the Superintendent to use District resources to educate the community on the purpose and benefits of the proposed referendum.

## **RESOLUTION 26-023**

A RESOLUTION OF THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, CALLING FOR A REFERENDUM RENEWAL TO BE HELD ON NOVEMBER 3, 2026 FOR THE PURPOSE OF SUBMITTING TO THE DULY QUALIFIED ELECTORS OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA A QUESTION REGARDING THE RENEWAL OF A LEVY OF AD VALOREM TAXES FOR SCHOOL OPERATIONAL PURPOSES TO CONTINUE IMPROVING COMPENSATION FOR TEACHERS AND INSTRUCTIONAL PERSONNEL AND TO IMPROVE STUDENT SAFETY AND SECURITY, FOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, INCLUDING PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS, WITH OVERSIGHT BY A CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE; PROVIDING FOR PROPER NOTICE OF SUCH REFERENDUM; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

**WHEREAS**, Miami-Dade County Public Schools remains among the highest-performing school districts in the nation as a result of the extraordinary efforts of its education professionals; and

**WHEREAS**, Miami-Dade County Public Schools' graduation rate continues to improve, rising to over 95 percent, the highest rate the District has achieved since the Florida Department of Education began tracking graduation statistics with modern methods in the late 1990s, serving as a testament to the success of voter-supported initiatives; and

**WHEREAS**, the School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, currently levies a voter-approved ad valorem tax of one (1) mill for operating expenses, approved by voters in the 2022 "Secure Our Future Referendum," a tax levy which is scheduled to expire on June 30, 2027; and

**WHEREAS**, Miami-Dade County Public Schools has been able to continue supporting student success, promoting safety, and maintaining a high-quality workforce specifically as a result of the additional funding provided through the 2022 "Secure Our Future Referendum"; and

**WHEREAS**, ensuring a safe, secure, and supportive educational environment is integral to successful student outcomes, and sufficient revenues are necessary to maintain high-quality instruction; and

**WHEREAS**, the renewal of this funding is essential to attract and retain high-quality instructional and student safety personnel in a county with a significantly higher cost of living; and

**WHEREAS**, exceptional public schools are paramount to delivering educational and support services to children and families, and are vital to the development of a competitive workforce, local economic stability, and a thriving community; and

**WHEREAS**, Miami-Dade County does not receive state education funding commensurate with its higher cost of living, which affects the ability of public schools to attract and retain high-quality instructional, support, and student safety and security-related personnel; and

**WHEREAS**, the State categorical funding allocation used for School Resource Officers and security personnel, and other safety and security requirements, remains insufficient to meet the statutory requirements and operational needs of the District; and

**WHEREAS**, the current millage rate levied by the District is substantially below the average rate levied over the past five decades; and

**WHEREAS**, the State's funding formula does not permit the use of capital funds for operating expenses except for limited purposes pursuant to § 1011.71(5), Florida Statutes (2025); and

**WHEREAS**, §§1011.71(9) and 1011.73, Florida Statutes, authorize the imposition by school boards of a levy of ad valorem taxes for up to four (4) years for "school operational purposes," including charter schools sponsored by the school district, subject to approval by the electors within the school district; and

**WHEREAS**, if such ad valorem tax levy is approved to commence upon expiration of the current 1.0 mill ad valorem tax levy, the School Board will provide funding for the purposes described above to public schools, including charter schools, throughout the District, and will convene a citizen oversight committee which will issue annual reports regarding receipts and expenditures in connection with such levy;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA:**

**Section 1. Renewal of Levy of Ad Valorem Taxes for Operating Expenses.** Pursuant to the provisions of § 1011.71(9), Florida Statutes, there is hereby proposed a **renewal** of the one (1) mill of ad valorem taxes for school operational purposes to continue improving compensation for teachers and instructional personnel and to improve student safety and security for public schools, including charter schools, with oversight by a citizen advisory committee.

**Section 2. Term of Levy.** The **renewed** one (1) mill levy of ad valorem taxes for operating expenses shall commence July 1, 2027, and shall remain in full force and effect for four years ending June 30, 2031, unless repealed or reduced prior to that time by resolution of the School Board.

**Section 3. Referendum.** The School Board hereby requests a referendum to be held throughout Miami-Dade County, Florida, on **Tuesday, November 3, 2026**, for the purpose of submitting to the duly qualified electors of Miami-Dade County the question of renewing this assessment.

**Section 4. Official Ballot Renewal Question.** The official ballot to be used in the election to be held on November 3, 2026, shall be substantially in the following form:

**REFERENDUM RENEWAL OF EXISTING AD VALOREM LEVY FOR TEACHERS, INSTRUCTIONAL PERSONNEL, STUDENT SAFETY AND SECURITY**

**SHALL THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, MAINTAIN THE EXISTING ONE (1) MILL AD VALOREM TAX LEVY EXCLUSIVELY FOR SCHOOL OPERATIONAL PURPOSES AT MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, INCLUDING PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS, TO CONTINUE IMPROVING COMPENSATION FOR TEACHERS AND INSTRUCTIONAL PERSONNEL AND TO IMPROVE STUDENT SAFETY AND SCHOOL SECURITY WITH OVERSIGHT BY A CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE, BEGINNING JULY 1, 2027, AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2031?**

**YES NO**

**Section 5. Effective Date.** Sections 1 through 2 of this Resolution shall be effective upon approval by a majority of votes cast by qualified electors in the referendum.

**Approved by The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida on this 22nd day of April, 2026.**