

Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, Board Member

SUBJECT: REQUEST APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION NO. 26-029 OF THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, RECOGNIZING DR. EVALINA W. BESTMAN FOR HER OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS AND DEDICATION TO THE MIAMI-DADE COUNTY COMMUNITY

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

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

Evalina W. Bestman has devoted her life to advancing mental health care, education, cultural competency, and community empowerment through more than five decades of extraordinary leadership and service. Dr. Bestman is the Founding Chief Executive Officer of New Horizons Community Mental Health Center, Inc., formerly the University of Miami–Jackson Memorial Community Mental Health Center, serving continuously since 1975 and establishing a national model for culturally competent behavioral health services. Dr. Bestman made history as the first Black mental health professional appointed Executive Director of a Community Mental Health Center in the State of Florida, while leading the first Community Mental Health Center in Miami-Dade County and helping pioneer one of the first anthropological, culturally responsive mental health care models in the nation.

Her distinguished academic career includes service as a Research Associate Professor at the University of Miami School of Medicine, Assistant Professor and Coordinator of the Ph.D. School Psychology Program at the University of Pittsburgh, and founding professor at Florida International University .A proud native of Miami, Dr. Bestman’s educational journey began at St. Agnes Episcopal Church and continued through Miami-Dade County Public Schools, culminating in her graduation as Valedictorian of Miami Northwestern Senior High School before earning her Bachelor of Arts degree from Bennett College and her Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from the University of Texas in 1972. Throughout her career, Dr. Bestman has served as a consultant, author, speaker, grant writer, and principal investigator for numerous transformative initiatives, including the nationally recognized Dually Diagnosed Project funded by the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, and the development of a national cross-cultural immersion training program for mental health professionals.

Her influence has extended to the national stage through service on President Jimmy Carter’s Commission on Mental Health Minority Task Force and through her scholarly contributions addressing homelessness, racism, sexism, transcultural family perspectives, and culturally appropriate mental health services. Dr. Bestman’s visionary leadership helped establish and strengthen numerous organizations dedicated to uplifting underserved communities, including the South Florida Chapter of the Association of Black Psychologists, Center for Family and Child Enrichment, Lock Towns Community Mental Health Center, Holy Temple Human Services Corporation, and El Portal C.A.R.E.S., Inc.

Her commitment to community service and human dignity has earned her widespread recognition, including the AXA Advisors Lifetime Achievement Award, Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce Healthcare Hero Award, the Virgil D. Hawkins Award from the National Bar Association, Congressional and municipal proclamations, induction into the Miami Northwestern Hall of Fame, and recognition as one of Greater Miami's Most Influential Black Leaders.

In tribute to her enduring legacy and immeasurable contributions to behavioral health care and community wellness, both the Golden Sands Corporation building and the New Horizons Community Mental Health Center were renamed in her honor of her remarkable legacy, but also serves to inspire students, educators, and community members to pursue excellence, lead with purpose, and remain dedicated to the betterment of society.

This item does not appear on the published agenda. There exists good cause to vary from the published agenda because the opportunity to properly and timely recognize Dr. Evalina W. Bestman arose after the publication of the agenda, and the opportunity to recognize Dr. Bestman for her extraordinary public service at a School Board meeting will not recur in the foreseeable future.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY MEMBER
BENDROSS-MINDINGALL:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve Resolution 26-029of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, recognizing Dr. Evalina W. Bestman for her outstanding contributions.

RESOLUTION NO. 26-029 OF THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, RECOGNIZING DR. EVALINA W. BESTMAN FOR HER OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS AND DEDICATION TO THE MIAMI-DADE COUNTY COMMUNITY

WHEREAS, Evalina W. Bestman has devoted her life to advancing mental health care, education, cultural competency, and community empowerment through more than five decades of extraordinary leadership and service. Dr. Bestman is the Founding Chief Executive Officer of New Horizons Community Mental Health Center, Inc., formerly the University of Miami–Jackson Memorial Community Mental Health Center, serving continuously since 1975 and establishing a national model for culturally competent behavioral health services. Dr. Bestman made history as the first Black mental health professional appointed Executive Director of a Community Mental Health Center in the State of Florida, while leading the first Community Mental Health Center in Miami-Dade County and helping pioneer one of the first anthropological, culturally responsive mental health care models in the nation; and

WHEREAS, her distinguished academic career includes service as a Research Associate Professor at the University of Miami School of Medicine, Assistant Professor and Coordinator of the Ph.D. School Psychology Program at the University of Pittsburgh, and founding professor at Florida International University. A proud native of Miami, Dr. Bestman’s educational journey began at St. Agnes Episcopal Church and continued through Miami-Dade County Public Schools, culminating in her graduation as Valedictorian of Miami Northwestern Senior High School before earning her Bachelor of Arts degree from Bennett College and her Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from the University of Texas in 1972. Throughout her career, Dr. Bestman has served as a consultant, author, speaker, grant writer, and principal investigator for numerous transformative initiatives, including the nationally recognized Dually Diagnosed Project funded by the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, and the development of a national cross-cultural immersion training program for mental health professionals; and

WHEREAS, her influence has extended to the national stage through service on President Jimmy Carter’s Commission on Mental Health Minority Task Force and through her scholarly contributions addressing homelessness, racism, sexism, transcultural family perspectives, and culturally appropriate mental health services. Dr. Bestman’s visionary leadership helped establish and strengthen numerous organizations dedicated to uplifting underserved communities, including the South Florida Chapter of the Association of Black Psychologists, Center for Family and Child Enrichment, Lock Towns Community Mental Health Center, Holy Temple Human Services Corporation, and El Portal C.A.R.E.S., Inc.; and

WHEREAS, her unwavering commitment to community service and human dignity has earned her widespread recognition, including the AXA Advisors Lifetime Achievement Award, Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce Healthcare Hero Award, the Virgil D. Hawkins Award from the National Bar Association, Congressional and municipal proclamations, induction into the Miami Northwestern Hall of Fame, and recognition as one of Greater Miami’s Most Influential Black Leaders. In tribute to her enduring legacy and immeasurable contributions to behavioral health care and community wellness, both the Golden Sands Corporation building and the New Horizons Community Mental Health Center were renamed in her honor;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve Resolution 26-029 of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, recognizing Dr. Evalina W. Bestman for her outstanding contributions.

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

Presented this thirteenth day of May, A. D. 2026

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

SCHOOL BOARD CHAIR

ATTEST:

Secretary