Office of School Board Members
Board Meeting of November 18, 2026

October 21, 2026

Mr. Roberto J. Alonso, Board Member

SUBJECT: **PROPOSED 2027 LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM OF THE GREATER FLORIDA CONSORTIUM OF SCHOOL BOARDS**

COMMITTEE: **FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS**

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

The Greater Florida Consortium of School Boards (GFCSB) is a coalition of 13 School Boards that have joined to assist each other in advancing educational issues of mutual concern. The member districts include Brevard, Broward, Charlotte, Collier, Hillsborough, Manatee, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Orange, Palm Beach, Pinellas, Sarasota and St. Lucie counties.

In developing the GFCSB's legislative platforms, member districts submitted legislative proposals for consideration and inclusion in its 2027 state and federal legislative platforms. On September 18, 2026, GFCSB representatives met in Miami-Dade County to finalize the drafts of the proposed 2027 State and Federal Legislative Programs. The draft programs include only those items which were approved by the school board representatives in attendance.

All 13 member school boards must review the draft programs and take official action on them. The proposed 2027 GFCSB State and Federal Legislative Programs are attached for reference. Each issue must be supported by all member districts before inclusion in the final adopted program. If a member school district votes to remove an issue from either of the proposed programs, the issue is removed from the respective GFCSB State or Federal program. Member boards have been asked to review and adopt the GFCSB's state and federal legislative programs as soon as possible in order for the GFCSB to begin advocacy efforts. Once all member boards have officially adopted the 2027 State and Federal Legislative Programs, they will be distributed to each of the member districts' Congressional delegations, relevant state and federal agencies, and interested citizen groups.

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

ACTION PROPOSED BY MR. ROBERTO J. ALONSO: That the School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, adopt the proposed draft of the Greater Florida Consortium of School Boards 2027 Federal Legislative Program.



GREATER FLORIDA CONSORTIUM OF SCHOOL BOARDS' 2027 LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

Constitution of the State of Florida, Article IX - - Section I.

"The education of children is a fundamental value of the people of the State of Florida. It is therefore a paramount duty of the State to make adequate provision for the education of all the children residing within its borders. Adequate provision shall be made by law for a uniform, efficient, safe, secure, and high-quality system of free public schools that allows students to obtain a high-quality education…."

GOAL: TO INCREASE, ON A PHASED-IN BASIS, THE AVERAGE PER STUDENT FUNDING TO ENSURE THAT FLORIDA IS IN THE TOP HALF OF THE STATES AND CAN PROVIDE A WORLD CLASS EDUCATION TO ENABLE ITS STUDENTS TO COMPETE AND EXCEL IN THE UNIVERSAL MARKETPLACE.

ENSURE THAT, IN ALL CASES, LEGISLATION BE EVALUATED TO PROVIDE THAT IT DOES NOT CONFLICT WITH THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND HOME RULE AUTHORITY OF SCHOOL BOARDS TO "OPERATE, CONTROL, AND SUPERVISE" ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITHIN THEIR SCHOOL DISTRICTS.

PRIORITY ISSUES

GOVERNANCE

1 Respect and adhere to the **Constitutional Authority** of School Boards.
*"The school board shall **Operate, Control and Supervise** all free public schools within the school district and determine the rate of school district taxes within the limits prescribed herein."* The Florida Constitution, Article IX, Section 4(b).

2 Waive audit finding penalties for **Out-Of-Field Teachers** who are certified and teaching in related subject areas.

3 Clarify that school districts are exempt from lawsuits against charter schools by amending 1002.33, Florida Statutes, to stipulate that a sponsor is not liable for civil damages under state law for personal injury, property damage, or death, or **any other civil claim** resulting from an act or omission of an officer, employee, agent, or governing body of the charter school.

4 Continue to reduce **regulations** for public school districts to better align with other K-12 charter, home school and private institutions that also receive state and/or federal funding.

5 Ensure School Board control of **Board-owned property** and allow greater flexibility when repurposing.

Roberto Alonso
President
Miami-Dade County

Edwin Ferguson
President-Elect
Palm Beach County

Patti Rendon
Secretary/Treasurer
Hillsborough County

FUNDING

1 Provide for an annual increase in the **Base Student Allocation** commensurate with the rate of inflation and cost of living increases (but no less than 5 percent new flexible funding), to ensure school systems can meet the rising costs in every aspect of their business.

2 **Modernize** the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) and ensure transparency by creating a separate "district" for scholarships or creating a **Family Empowerment Scholarship** categorical.

3 Commission an **independent study** to determine adequate education funding level that accurately reflects varying **cost differences** among individual school districts and regions within our State.

4 Maintain the full calculation of **Required Local Effort** (RLE) the .748 Mill (LDM) and the 1.5 Mill (Capital Outlay).

5 Minimize impact to school districts from any **proposed property tax reform**.

6 Fully fund any **New Mandates**, without transferring money from the Base Student Allocation (BSA) or Discretionary Local Effort (DLE).

7 Align the rules and guidelines for **district-operated virtual programs** regarding the ability to report FTE beyond the 180-day school year with those already in place for Florida Virtual School.

8 Any proration to school districts for FY 2027-2028 should be covered by the Florida Legislature by maintaining the **Education Enrollment Stabilization Program** or otherwise established comparable fund as may be defined by the legislature.

9 Increase the **Safe Schools** Categorical allocation to narrow the funding gap associated with the mandate to staff one "safe school officer" per school and ensure sustainable funding for school districts and expand allowable uses to include technology and digital resources, and to upgrade and strengthen **Cybersecurity** controls.

10 Increase the investment in **Mental Health Services** by providing funding to enhance training for and increase the number of personnel providing services within schools (including but not limited to school counselors, mental health professionals, school social workers, school psychologists and school nurses and/or emergency medical personnel).

11 Increase per pupil funding for **Exceptional Student Education (ESE)**.

12 Fully fund academically and developmentally appropriate high quality full day **Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten** (VPK) programs.

13 Increase the **Academic Acceleration Options Supplement** to include workload increases to expand access to advanced and accelerated courses.

14 Increase the **Transportation Categorical** to reflect the increased state required operational and capital costs.

15 **Transfer** from the current limited student count periods to a model that more accurately reflects student enrollment periods throughout the year, **but not less than quarterly.**

16 Explore additional state investments and flexibility for evidence-based **Pre-K through** 3 literacy initiatives, including targeted interventions, tutoring, summer programs, teacher support, and innovative tools, with funding tied to measurable improvements in third grade reading proficiency.

17 **Provide state funding to support the implementation requirements of state board rules related to AI and internet safety** including AI literacy, teacher professional development, approved instructional tools, cybersecurity and student privacy safeguards, and evaluation of student outcomes.

CAPITAL OUTLAY/FACILITIES

1 Establish a parental choice opportunity to **restore a conversion charter** to traditional public school.

2 Prohibit conversion **charter schools from transitioning to a private school** in a public owned facility **without school board approval**.

3 Permit school districts to **renew voter-approved millage** for a period of up to eight (8) years.

4 Calculate **Capital Outlay FTE** to include all students – including Charter, Adult Ed, Early Childhood Pre-K, and Virtual Programs.

5 Establish a **state level disaster recovery trust fund** for Florida Public Schools to ensure the recovery and restoration of educational facilities in the aftermath of a hurricane or other catastrophic event covering losses both above and below any collectable property insurance limits.

6 Fully reflect program utilization rates in Florida Inventory of School Houses **(FISH) reports** to include ESE, daytime adult education, and class size maximums.

7 Amend Statute to state **that** a school which has not received an accountability grade lower than a "B" in the preceding three years is not eligible for **charter** conversion.

8 Stipulate that a school receiving an accountability grade of "A" or "B" within the last three years is not eligible for automatic co-location by a **School of Hope**.

9 **Provide school districts the flexibility to build and/or renovate to the Florida building code.** Clarify that a district school board may elect to construct new or renovate an existing educational facility in compliance with the **Florida Building Code**, provided that all applicable life-safety and fire codes are met. A district school board electing this option is **exempt** from the additional requirements contained within the State Requirements for Educational Facilities **(SREF).**

10 Require the Florida Department of Education to include a cost-effectiveness analysis in its recommendations on school modernization and replacement and stipulate that the department must prioritize the most financially prudent outcome for the taxpayer when making a final recommendation on the action to be taken based on a district submitted **Castaldi Study**.

ACADEMICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

1 ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW & RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Pause** the requirement for the State Board to automatically annually adjust the **School Grading Scale to provide for a review of the state accountability system.**
- Adjust how middle schoolers are identified for **Math** acceleration in school grade formulas, by increasing the minimum threshold to Level 4.
- Calculate high school math performance-based student earning a Level 3 or higher on Algebra 1 by grade 9, and students earning a Level 3 or higher on Geometry by grade 10.
- Eliminate the standalone statewide ELA writing test.
- Require all students who receive public education funding to participate in all required **state academic accountability assessments** and have those results reported to the FLDOE.
- **Commission an independent study to evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of Florida's teacher performance system**, including alternatives to the requirement that student test scores must account for at least 33 percent of a teacher's performance.

2 Amend the **Florida Academic Scholars** Award to include student eligibility for the award for those recognized by the College Board National Program as a scholar recipient.

3 Expand the **workforce and testing concordance options** for high school graduation assessment requirements.

4 Tackle the soaring cost of **instructional materials** by lengthening textbook option cycles and deregulating purchasing methods for school districts.

5 Direct the Department of Education to establish a specific, non-penalized withdrawal/transfer-out code within state student database reporting systems for high school students transferring in the Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program.

6 **Provide seat time flexibility for innovative education delivery options.**

OPERATIONS

1 Clarify that School Districts are not permitted to reimburse the insurer for **Personal Injury Protection**.

2 Allow school districts the option to participate in the **State Health Plan**.

3 **Commission a study** to determine the impact and feasibility of allowing school districts to opt in to the State **Health Plan.**

4 Include certified **Pre-Kindergarten** staff employed by charter and district operated public schools in the definition of **K-12 Instructional Personnel**.

5 **Fund and direct** the Department of Education to, in an expeditious manner, transition to a **modern,** transparent **Student Information System (SIS)** by implementing a statewide database to track all publicly funded students in real-time.

6 Amend state **sovereign immunity** laws to explicitly clarify that sovereign immunity is not waived for injuries occurring on school district-owned property (such as tracks, fields, and playgrounds) during non-school-sponsored, recreational community use.



GREATER FLORIDA CONSORTIUM OF SCHOOL BOARDS

GFCSB Federal Advocacy Platform for the 120th Congress 2027

Who We Are

The Greater Florida Consortium of School Boards (GFCSB) currently represents more than 1.5 million **(55%)** students in **13** Florida school districts across 19 congressional districts. Together, we speak with one voice to ensure federal investments in public education are strong, reliable, and aligned with student needs.

Our Ask of Congress

Federal investment in public education is a nonpartisan, high-return investment in America's future. Predictable and adequate funding for IDEA, Titles I–IV, infrastructure, mental health, connectivity, and disaster preparedness protects students, strengthens local budgets, and creates resilient communities.

- **Provide adequate, reliable, and timely federal funding** for public schools, ensuring resources reach districts for their intended purposes.
- **Oppose block grants without accountability**, preserve protections ensuring funds benefit the students with the highest needs.
- **Keep federal school funding student-centered**, tied to accountability, transparency, and student outcomes.

Guiding Principles

1. **Student-first**: Students are the ultimate beneficiaries of federal investment in learning, safety, and opportunity.
2. **Local flexibility with accountability**: Districts need flexibility to target resources while demonstrating results and transparency.
3. **Cost-effectiveness**: Investments in teachers, mental health, infrastructure, and cybersecurity reduce long-term costs and build a stronger economy.
4. **National security & resilience**: School facilities, broadband, and data security are essential to continuity of learning and the nation's preparedness.
5. **Educational priorities**: Safe schools, strong teachers, special education services, disaster recovery, and student protections build strong communities, and are critical to the future of the American workforce.

Block Grants Concerns:

Current federal funding structures ensure that investments are tied to specific benefits for identified populations. If federal programs like IDEA or Title I are converted into block grants, it should be with guardrails that ensure the intended student groups are still served, and that a level of accountability is maintained. These programs ensure that children with disabilities get the services they need and that schools serving low-income students receive extra support. Maintaining guardrails would ensure that funds are not redirected to cover budget gaps or unrelated projects. Thoughtful implementation of any redesign of the current delivery of federal support should maintain accountability and protection for our most vulnerable students so they can continue to thrive as part of a successful, strong community and nation.

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President
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Patti Rendon
Secretary/Treasurer
Hillsborough County

Greater Florida Consortium of School Boards Federal Priority Asks

1. **Fulfill the Federal Commitment to IDEA**

   The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) guarantees students with disabilities a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Yet, historically Congress has funded only a fraction of the federal commitment (~15% vs. 40% authorized). Local school districts shoulder the unfunded mandate, diverting resources from general education.

Ask:

- Establish a multi-year glide path toward full IDEA funding.
- Provide predictable appropriations and targeted support for high-need districts.

2. **Prioritize K–12 Education Funding (Titles I–IV)**

   Federal Title I-IV Funding is essential for K-12 Education:

   - **Title I, Part A** provides supplemental funding for high-poverty schools, helping pay for teachers, aides, materials, tutoring, and extended learning. Without it, schools would face larger class sizes and elimination of programs like after-school and summer learning.**Title II, Part A** supports teacher pipelines, including recruitment, mentoring, professional development, and retention. Cuts would worsen shortages and reduce educator quality, directly impacting student achievement.
   - **Title III, Part A** provides funding to support English Language Learners (ELLs) with language instruction, teacher training, and family engagement. Without it, ELL students would fall behind academically, widening achievement gaps leading to a host of worsening academic and socio-economic outcomes.
   - **Title IV, Part A** (Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants) helps districts offer well-rounded education, integrate technology, and maintain safe and healthy schools. Loss of funding for these programs would undermine student enrichment and limit digital literacy.

Ask:

- Increase sustained funding for Title I, Part A to expand interventions, tutoring, extended learning, and summer programs for students.
- Increase and stabilize Title II, Part A to address educator shortages through recruitment, mentoring, professional development, and retention.
- Protect and expand Title III to ensure English Language Learners gain language proficiency in order to access academic and workforce opportunities.
- Protect and grow Title IV to sustain STEM, arts, technology, and safe schools' initiatives.

3. **Support Child Nutrition Programs**

   Federal school nutrition programs help districts provide healthy breakfasts and lunches to students. The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) allows qualifying schools and districts to provide meals at no charge to ALL students, reducing administrative burdens and expanding access. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is an important source of direct certification used in determining CEP eligibility and reimbursement. Federal reimbursement must keep pace with food and labor costs so districts can provide nutritious meals without creating additional pressure on local education budgets.

Ask:

- Protect and strengthen funding and reimbursement for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.
- Expand and adequately fund CEP so more eligible schools can provide meals at no charge to all students.
- Protect SNAP access and direct certification processes that support student meal eligibility and CEP participation.
- **Revise** Federal nutrition standards (originating from the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act) to allow greater menu flexibility, lowering food waste and procurement costs.

4. **Prioritize Connectivity and Cybersecurity (E-Rate)**

   Reliable internet access and secure networks are now core to K–12 education. The federal E-Rate program has been essential for broadband and Wi-Fi in schools. However, funding caps and outdated rules limit its ability to cover cybersecurity needs. Districts cannot meet these demands without strengthened E-Rate support and/or additional federal investment.

Ask:

- Protect and strengthen the E-Rate program to preserve discounts for broadband, Wi-Fi, and internal connections.
- Increase funding caps and expand eligible uses to include cybersecurity and modern network security.
- Increase federal investments in educational technology to enhance student academic outcomes.

5. Invest in School Safety

School districts need resources to protect students through both physical security and prevention. Evidence-based approaches—threat assessment teams, safe school climate initiatives, and evidence based practices—must be paired with infrastructure like smart cameras, controlled access and communications systems.

Ask:

- Expand DOJ School Violence Prevention Program (SVPP)/COPS grants for both safety programming, personnel, and facility upgrades.
- Increase competitive funding for evidence-based prevention strategies alongside physical security improvements.

6. Invest in School Infrastructure

Many Florida school facilities are outdated, with urgent needs for HVAC upgrades, safe drinking water, ADA accessibility, energy-efficient systems, and hurricane resilience. Local school districts cannot meet these needs without federal partnership. Modern facilities improve student health, learning conditions, community quality of life, and long-term cost savings.

Ask:

- Create and expand flexible capital grant programs (formula + competitive) for HVAC, indoor air quality, ADA compliance, lead/asbestos remediation, school hardening, and energy retrofits.
- Dedicate a K–12 tranche within federal infrastructure programs to ensure schools are not left behind.

7. Support School-Based Mental Health

Students' mental health needs are rising, and schools are often the first point of access for services. School-Based Mental Health Grants allow districts to expand counselors, psychologists, and social workers, as well as telehealth partnerships. Without reliable federal funding, these critical supports are unsustainable.

Ask:

- Secure sustained, dedicated funding for School-Based Mental Health Grants.
- Support workforce pipelines to attract mental health professionals into schools.

8. Strengthen Disaster Preparedness & Recovery (FEMA)

Florida schools face frequent hurricanes and natural disasters. FEMA's Public Assistance program can be slow and inconsistent, delaying recovery and reopening of schools. Districts need clear, expedited processes and dedicated school-specific resiliency funding.

Ask:

- Streamline FEMA reimbursement and expand school-specific resiliency authorities.
- Ensure districts can access pre-disaster mitigation and planning grants.
- Protect schools in any FEMA restructuring by prioritizing expedited aid.