

Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Board Member

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZE THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS TO REVIEW THE POSSIBLE IMPLEMENTATION OF METAL DETECTORS AND THE APPLICATION OF LIMITED SCHOOL ENTRY POINTS AS POTENTIAL SECURITY ENHANCEMENTS IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (M-DCPS)

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: SAFE, HEALTHY AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

At the School Board Meeting of January 13, 2016, Board Member Susie Castillo proffered Agenda Item H-7, Revised, *Metal Detectors*, approved by the Board, which authorized the Superintendent to conduct a comprehensive review of existing security measures in place district-wide, examining the feasibility of incorporating the daily use of metal detectors in schools. This item also included in the action proposed by Ms. Castillo for the Superintendent to report back to the Board findings and recommendations by the March 2016 Board meeting.

A staff follow-up was submitted on March 9, 2016 which included an analysis and an extensive review of security measures relating to the feasibility of installing metal detectors in all schools. The follow-up provided to the Board incorporated the following: "... since there is no stand-alone security program or system that can absolutely prevent every possible instance of school violence, the most appropriate approach to maintaining school safety involves the implementation of early violence prevention and social skills programs and the establishment of trusting relationships between staff and students as currently implemented in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS)." Further, "a review of larger school districts utilizing fixed metal detection systems have shown insignificant differences in the prevention of weapons and contraband being seized as a result of the use of metal detectors. Humanistic and student-centered approaches anchored on evidence-based prevention strategies have proven to arrive at safer schools."

The heartbreaking incidents at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas Senior High School in Parkland, Florida, on February 14, 2018, and the most recent tragedy at Santa Fe Senior High School in Santa Fe, Texas on May 18, 2018, have raised safety and security measures to a new level. The utilization of metal detectors are often brought up by parents, community stakeholders, and the media as an added security measure in schools, especially after high-profile school violence incidents.

School Board Policy 7440 – *Plant Security* – states "The Superintendent is authorized to install metal detectors and other security devices which would assist in the detection of guns and dangerous weapons in school buildings and/or on District property." Additionally, School Board Policy 5771 – *Search and Seizure* includes the following language: "To deter individuals from bringing weapons to school, curtail the threat of violence, and foster a safe learning environment for students, staff, and visitors, metal detector searches are authorized without individualized suspicion pursuant to procedures established by the Superintendent." In addition, School Board policy 9160 – *Public Attendance at School Events* – states: "A Principal may also use detectors and other devices as necessary for the safety of participants and visitors."

Following the vision and commitment of Board Member Susie Castillo and current Board policies, it is of utmost importance that the debate about metal detectors be further discussed at this time. Any debate about metal detectors in schools must go beyond a philosophical debate. The discussion must first and foremost focus on implementation considerations and the return on investment versus the implementation costs of properly executing a school metal detector program. Furthermore, the current random metal detector program being implemented in Miami-Dade County Public Schools should be reviewed and recommendations made, as appropriate.

Alongside the concept of metal detectors, an assessment of the concept of a single point of entry at schools should be considered. While it may not be possible to just have one single point of entry, the discussion should focus on limiting entry levels in school, as feasible as possible.

The Board and the Superintendent have already taken action on enhancing safety and security measures in our schools. The Florida State Legislature also passed the Marjory Stoneman Douglas HS Public Safety Act which addresses the crisis of gun violence by providing law enforcement and courts with the tools to enhance public safety and promote school safety and enhanced coordination between education and law enforcement.

While there is no single strategy, or for that matter even a combination of strategies, that can guarantee that there will not be another act of violence in a school, the recent incidents have elevated concerns, interest, and expected actions to reassure students, parents, and our workforce that all possible recommendations are being addressed.

This item has been reviewed and approved by the School Board Attorney's office as to form and legal sufficiency.

ACTION PROPOSED BY

MS. MARIA TERESA ROJAS:

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent of Schools to:

1. seek the assistance of the School Board Attorney to define any legal issues related to the implementation of metal detectors in schools;
2. include in the Board's legislative priorities, at both the State and Federal levels, a request for funding metal detectors in school buildings as a safety and security measure;
3. review the random metal detector program being implemented in M-DCPS;
4. establish a Task Force comprised of students, teachers, principals, assistant principals, school police, representatives from the labor unions and employee organizations, the PTA/PTSA, members of the districtwide safety and security committee, and interested community members to review the concept of installing metal detectors in schools, including timelines, staffing, potential sources of funding, estimated costs and the feasibility of implementing limited entry points at schools; and
5. provide the recommendations from the Superintendent, the School Board Attorney, and the Task Force to the School Board by October 10, 2018.