

Dr. Steve Gallon III, Board Member

SUBJECT: EXPLORATION AND EXAMINATION OF LOCAL FUNDING SOURCES AND SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE TEACHER SALARIES

COMMITTEE: FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TEACHERS, LEADERS, AND STAFF

Teachers are the backbone of public education. The work of their hands, heads, and hearts continues to leave an indelible mark on the present and future lives of their students. It is their work that represents the fulcrum of student learning, growth, and achievement. Throughout history, the role and impact of teachers on the learning and lives of citizenry, as well as the achievement, progress, and success of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS). In addition, the work of teachers have consistently played a significant role in the success of the community and the prosperity of the local community.

Although each individual and collective stakeholder played and continues to play a significant role in the overall success of the District, the many achievements, accolades, and awards received by (M-DCPS) have been a direct result of the hard work, dedication, and often personal, professional, and financial sacrifices of its teachers. Every member of this community, at some place and point in their lives, has experienced and benefited from the transformative power of a highly committed, competent, and caring teacher. Yet, despite these realities, teachers too often remain the unsung heroes of our time, and often go without the professional recognition and compensation they deserve.

M-DCPS recognizes the very significant, life-long impact that teachers have on its students and their ability to positively influence student learning. It is through this positive influence that teachers inspire students towards not only academic achievement and success in their present learning endeavors, but in the active, intentional pursuit of their life's aspirations, personal dreams, and career goals.

Despite empirical and related data that confirm the enriching effect teachers have on the daily lives of their students, as well as the impact they have on their life-long educational and career aspirations, teacher salaries in the state of Florida continue to lag significantly behind other states throughout the nation. A recent study entitled "*The Best and Worst States for Teachers*" cites Florida as one of the worst places to be a teacher in which it ranks Florida 47th out of 50 states and Washington, D.C. The study analyzed data on a variety of factors including teacher salaries and pensions, turnover rates, and overall public school spending.

This reality has not been lost on the Florida Legislature. In the 2017 Legislative Sessions, it set aside \$100,000 in the 2017-2018 education budget to study cost-of-living disparities across the state's 67 counties. After legislative approval, the line item was subsequently vetoed by the Governor.

The challenges reflected in teacher salaries in the state of Florida are exacerbated in Miami-Dade County and among teachers employed by M-DCPS. Despite the Board's commitment and desire to improve compensation for teachers, factors associated with the cost of living in Miami-Dade make it a daunting task, especially in housing costs. Another recent study found Miami to be one of the least affordable places to live for teachers and one of the toughest places in the country for teachers to find housing. The study also revealed that in addition to the increase of housing in Miami, teacher salaries have remained relatively stagnant and have not kept pace with cost-of-living increases in Miami-Dade County. Further, the 2004 elimination of Florida's differentiated funding formula, which factored in costs of living differences and addressed teacher salaries deemed insufficient to local cost-of-living requirements, continues to perplex the issue of school funding and teacher salaries in Miami-Dade County. Florida's District Cost Differential, which adjusted funding to reflect each district's cost of living, has cost M-DCPS hundreds of millions in local school funding since its elimination over thirteen years ago.

The abovementioned factors continue to place teachers employed in Miami-Dade County in a financially untenable position and in one that adversely impacts their ability to adequately provide for and support themselves and their families. It also places an inequitable burden on M-DCPS in its continued efforts to recruit, develop, and retain highly committed, qualified and dedicated teachers for its students.

These combined challenges require leadership from the Board and Superintendent, as well as an intentional and collective conversation and level of engagement from the community. This item seeks to direct the Superintendent to establish a plan and process to explore and examine local funding sources to improve teacher salaries in M-DCPS.

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

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

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

1. establish a Task Force comprised of School Board Member appointees, district administrators, principals, teachers, UTD representatives, parents, and community/business leaders/stakeholders to review and discuss the challenges and issues of teacher salaries in M-DCPS;
2. establish a process to solicit input and feedback and gather both qualitative and quantitative data regarding the challenges and issues of teacher salaries in M-DCPS from UTD and teachers in M-DCPS;
3. identify and assign designated staff to support, guide, define, and facilitate the work and related deliverables and timelines of the Task Force and collect, analyze, and report both qualitative and quantitative data regarding the challenges and issues of teacher salaries in M-DCPS from UTD and teachers in M-DCPS ;
4. present findings, recommendations, and proposed local solutions to the Board by the Board Meeting of May 16, 2018; and
5. schedule a Board Workshop to review findings and Task Force recommendations made to the Board by July 30, 2018.