



## FADSS

Florida Association of  
District School Superintendents

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# Florida Association of District School Superintendents

May 16, 2017

The Honorable Rick Scott  
Governor, State of Florida  
The Capitol, Plaza Level 05  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor Scott:

On behalf of the Florida Association of District School Superintendents, we urge you to veto HB 7069 and the Florida Education Funding Program (FEFP) in the General Appropriations Act.

**The Budget:** The Base Student Allocation (BSA) is the basic per student allocation that funds programs that serve Florida students. While the FEFP includes a \$24.49 increase in per student funding, the cut to the BSA results in a negative \$27.07. We cannot recall a non-recession year in which the BSA was cut. Due to the decrease to the BSA, many school districts will experience an overall cut in per student funding.

The proposed rate increases for the Florida Retirement System are projected to consume about \$54 million of the \$69 million generated by the \$24.49 increase in per student funding. This will leave about \$5.32 per student for districts to address all other increased costs of providing services to our students. School districts are facing increased health care, utility, fuel and other operational costs. When compared to the funding provided in the budget 10 years ago, the essential core of the operating budget remains below pre-recession levels.

**HB 7069** - Overall, HB 7069 promotes policies that are detrimental to students and the teachers who serve them tirelessly every day. The reasons for a veto are listed for your review.

**The process** - Comprehensive legislation that rewrites public education policy should not be dropped on the last day of session in a lengthy amendment. Such a comprehensive shift in public education policy and funding must be vetted in the open and be transparent. No amendments were allowed. This was not a transparent process. Florida's students and parents deserve better.

**Title I** - The bill continues to put district-wide services at risk, particularly students in poverty. In essence, the language dilutes funding, diminishes local control, and precludes a district from targeting services from a district-wide basis that enables more students to be more efficiently served with public dollars.

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**Capital Outlay** – The bill requires school districts to share their discretionary capital millage with charter schools. Until this legislation, the statutory language had been permissive and some districts shared their discretionary millage with charter schools, but it was a local decision. The 1.5 discretionary millage is the major non-voted source of revenue for school districts to pay for the maintenance and repair of schools, purchase school buses, and pay for property casualty insurance. Districts deferred maintenance, repairs, and purchases during the Great Recession. Even with the economic recovery, the backlog goes unmet.

Capital dollars are based on student population and they are spent based on the greatest need. Regular public schools do not provide funds to a school that has a new HVAC system when the school across the district has a failing HVAC system. All districts currently have needs that overwhelmingly outweigh the funds generated by the discretionary millage.

**Local Control** - The bill removes the authority of school districts to deny the replication or establishment of charter schools. With that statutory authority there is unfettered demand for capital outlay funds. Local property taxpayers and their elected school board members have little way of controlling or directing the tax dollars that are levied. Finally, there is no guarantee that the taxpayers will have an asset that they, the taxpayers will own.

**Local Zoning and Land Use Designations** – The bill removes the authority of local governments to require charter schools and schools of hope from obtaining a special exception, rezoning or land use change when located in community facilities and postsecondary institutions.

**Schools of Hope** - The bill establishes “schools of hope,” or charter schools, as a mechanism for assisting persistently low-performing schools. However, there is no requirement that the school of hope actually serve a single student enrolled in the low-performing school or be located within a reasonable distance from such school.

A “school of hope” must submit a “notice of intent” to a school district in which a persistently low-performing school has been identified. The school district is mandated to enter into a performance-based agreement to open a hope school. There is little to no ability to negotiate an agreement to ensure that there is a need for the school or that the students will be provided needed services. Finally, the “schools of hope” may duplicate without demonstrated need.

**District Charter Schools** - The legislation provides that 25 district charter schools are eligible to compete for “schools of hope” funding (less than 1 per district). There are at least 115 eligible schools and districts only have the chance to serve 25 schools and receive up to \$2,000 per student after an extensive application review and approval process before the State Board of Education. A similar process is not required of non-district “schools of hope.”

**No Parity between Charter Schools and Traditional Public Schools** - Providing additional funds for charter schools to secure wrap-around services to meet the serious and unmet basic needs of children is a step in the right direction. However, traditional public schools should receive equal funding. If a parent chooses to enroll their child in a traditional public school, that child should receive the same assistance as those that choose a charter school. Recess is another example. The bill requires that each school board provide at least 100 minutes of recess each week or 20 minutes every day for students in kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Charter schools are exempt from this requirement.

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**The Best and Brightest Teacher Scholarship Program** – This is both a policy and budget provision. Teachers who meet current requirements are eligible for a scholarship. A second and new component to the program is the addition of principals receiving their own scholarship. A major component of the Best and Brightest Program is the additional scholarship or bonus for the next three fiscal years to teachers rated highly effective or effective. Bonuses are not opposed, but the process by which the funds were appropriated bypassed the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP).

**FEFP Bypassed** - The major funding formula for public education – the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) is bypassed by the funding of bonuses in the bill. Had these funds been included in the Base Student Allocation of the FEFP, teachers and principals would have received actual raises. Instead, they will be provided a “scholarship” for one year with a promise that may not materialize in the next two fiscal years. Therefore, the FEFP could be bypassed for three fiscal years. In addition, these funds cannot be used to meet basic district operational expenses such as increases in FRS, utilities, insurance, etc. This is more problematic due to the education budget just passed which resulted in a reduction in the Base Student Allocation.

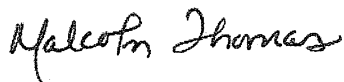
Superintendents are not opposed to charter schools and welcome additional resources for both charter schools and regular public schools to serve students. It is encouraging that the legislature has recognized that additional funds are needed. Regardless of where a child goes to school – a charter school or a regular public school – he or she should expect the same services. In addition, both charter schools and regular public schools must be transparent and accountable to the public that they serve.

Superintendents are also not opposed to rewarding teachers and principals or finding solutions for challenging schools, but to have them become a major budget component on the last day of session is unwarranted. Teacher/principal compensation and managing turn around schools deserves a comprehensive, long-term approach engaging a multitude of stakeholders if we are going to meet the needs of low performing students as well as all of Florida’s students.

Superintendents are also not opposed to bonuses for teachers and principals, but funding them through a conforming bill at the expense of the FEFP is not the way to recruit and retain highly effective teachers and principals.

Let’s work together to ensure that students attending and graduating from all public schools in Florida are ready for the workforce and postsecondary education. An FEFP that includes a BSA in the negative and the passage of HB 7069 fall short of that promise. The Florida District School Superintendents respectfully request that you veto the FEFP and HB 7069.

Sincerely,



Malcolm Thomas  
President

cc: Commissioner Pam Stewart  
Kim McDougal  
Ashley Spicola  
Kevin Reilly