

The School District of Hernando County, Florida

Office of the Superintendent

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Superintendent: *Lori M. Romano, Ph.D.*

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Linda K. Prescott

May 17, 2017

Governor Rick Scott
Executive Office of Governor Rick Scott
400 S Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Honorable Governor Scott:

On behalf of the Hernando County School District and my community, I write to add my voice to those who urge you to veto HB7069. While the manner in which this bill was hammer-driven through session in order to avoid proper debate and careful review belies the claim that our leaders genuinely seek transparency, instead I write to you to share what the very real impact of HB7069 means to our district.

Title I – Funds would be shuffled in such a way as to render those dollars negligible to its intended purpose. You can imagine that if the same amount of money is required to be spread across more schools, those funds now become supplemental instead of critical essential funds for robust interventions and services for our schools that support our poorest communities. Also, HB7069 reduces funding for Title I staff who act as critical partners for Title I schools helping to secure quality resources and expand services.

Base Student Allocation – This is perhaps the most disappointing and deflating component of this bill. Hernando County Schools rely on 78% of its funding to come from state dollars. We do not have the benefit of generous property values that exist in other Florida counties. To put real dollars behind what this means, after other required costs that the district must pay (retirement, healthcare, etc.) what would remain from the BSA funds, to serve Hernando's students is approximately \$5.00 per student.

Governor Scott, we cannot sustain the quality of programs and quantity of services if we cut funds to less than what would pay for a cup of coffee or a fast food meal.

We have an incredible team of professional educators and leaders in this district. And, for as long as I have been their Superintendent, I have stood before them each year and asked them to make difficult budget decisions that requires cutting staff and programs in order to meet the demands of new legislation and funding. No sooner do I also ask them this than I have to ask them to be creative and find innovative ways to mentor great teachers, use more technology and provide dynamic programs from which globally competitive students would benefit.

Five dollars per student cannot be what our legislators had in mind when they voted for HB7069.

There is growing belief that our legislature is actively working to destroy our public schools in favor of charter schools. Rather, I hope this is merely a blunder of ignorance and that you are able to prevent what will certainly mean the loss of quality educators, the reduction or elimination of athletic and academic programs and the closing of schools because that is all that is left for many of us. Like most localities, our schools are the heart of the Hernando community and our people are united like family in an effort to provide our students with the best possible education. Please take the time to consider the great impact of your decision on the future of public education in Florida.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lori Romano". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lori M. Romano, Ph.D.
Superintendent