

The School Board of ORANGE COUNTY, FLORIDA



P.O. Box 271, Orlando, Florida 32802 • (407) 317-3236

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SUPERINTENDENT
Dr. Barbara M. Jenkins

OUR VISION:

To be the top producer
of successful students
in the nation

May 17, 2017

The Honorable Rick Scott
Executive Office of the Governor
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32300-001

Dear Governor Scott:

On May 8, 2017, the Legislature passed the 2017-18 fiscal year budget and HB 7069, the K-12 education appropriations conforming bill. We respectfully urge you to veto HB 7069 and the Florida Education Finance Program ("FEFP") portion of the General Appropriations Act.

Despite having a budget surplus in Florida, the funding contained in the FEFP represents an inadequate average increase statewide of \$24.49 (or a 0.34%) per student. This level of funding does not begin to address the basic educational services we are tasked with providing our students. Increases in the overall education budget are a direct result of increased student enrollment of which a substantial portion will be needed to fund state mandated increases in the Florida Retirement System contributions.

In addition, legislators have proposed a cut to the Base Student Allocation ("BSA") of \$27.07 per student, which results in funding less than it was ten years ago. These cuts not only affect the educational services for our students but they may also affect our ability to provide raises for our hard working teachers.

Instead of providing the necessary funding increases for all public schools, the Legislature has created "Schools of Hope" which provides \$140 million in additional funding for the program, and only permits 25 traditional public schools in the state to participate. Additionally, the Legislature is providing \$214 million in teacher "bonuses", not raises, for certain teachers through the Best and Brightest program. If both of these funds were instead redirected to the FEFP, it would result in an overall statewide increase in funding of \$354 million. This would mean our school district would receive an additional \$25 million (2.2% increase in per student funding) to deliver basic educational services and provide teachers meaningful raises, instead of a "one-time" bonus.

In addition to the decrease in the BSA, HB 7069 would also remove school district discretion on spending of Title I funds, which would have dire implications for our most vulnerable students experiencing poverty. District-wide services such as summer reading programs, summer tutoring, additional learning time and parental engagement programs would be negatively impacted and potentially eliminated. Moreover, the limitations imposed in HB 7069 will limit the work and stall the progress that has been made by our School Transformation Office ("STO") through turnaround efforts with our lowest performing schools.

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Furthermore, HB 7069 contains a provision requiring school districts to share their 1.5 millage capital outlay dollars with charter schools. This funding is critically important to a high student growth school districts such as Orange County where there is a desperate need to address increased enrollment. If HB 7069 is signed into law, our school district will have to redirect funds from locally generated property taxes for traditional public schools to charter schools on a per student basis, not based on need. Continued reduction in capital millage and dwindling amounts of PECO funds will jeopardize our ability to provide maintenance to our 188 schools.

For the aforementioned reasons, we respectfully request that you veto HB 7069 and the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) portion of the General Appropriations Act. Thank you for your consideration and for your service to the citizens of Florida.

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Sincerely,

William E. Sublette
Chairman

Barbara M. Jenkins
Superintendent of Schools

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School Board Member District 7