



## FADSS

Florida Association of  
District School Superintendents

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**SUPERINTENDENT  
DEVELOPMENT**

**GOVERNMENTAL  
RELATIONS**

**ORGANIZATIONAL &  
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

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# Florida Association of District School Superintendents

September 13, 2018

The Honorable Rick Scott  
Governor, State of Florida  
The Capitol  
400 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Governor Scott:

In response to the tragic events at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, the Florida Legislature enacted and you signed the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act during the 2018 Legislative Session. This law and corresponding budget appropriated over \$400 million dollars to enhance school safety and fund mental health services. Superintendents are grateful that you and the Legislature responded so swiftly with legislation and significant funding including:

- ◆ Almost \$162 million in total funds to the Department of Education (DOE) for distribution to school districts to fund the Safe Schools allocation (An additional \$97.5 million added in SB 7026 to the historical funding of \$64.5 million in FEFP funding provided since 2011).
- ◆ \$67.5 million to DOE to allocate to sheriffs' offices to reimburse for specified costs in establishing and training a civilian-based guardian program.
- ◆ Over \$98 million to implement a grant program administered by DOE for improving and hardening the physical security of school facilities and property.
- ◆ Over \$69 million to DOE for distribution to school districts to fund the mental health assistance allocation as provided in plans required of all districts and participating charter schools.
- ◆ \$6.7 million to DOE to implement the youth mental health awareness and assistance training.
- ◆ Over \$18 million to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to procure additional mobile crisis teams.
- ◆ \$9.8 million to DCF to procure additional community action treatment teams.
- ◆ \$1 million to design and construct a memorial for the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School victims.
- ◆ Over \$25 million to DOE to replace Building 12 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

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Superintendents and local communities labored through the summer to ensure that a safe-school officer is present at each school campus when school opened in August. We were successful and school began smoothly with the added security measures implemented. These officers include School Resource Officers (SRO) employed by sheriffs and local law enforcement agencies, officers employed by school boards that have a district police force, and certified guardians. The cost to provide officers far exceeded the legislative appropriation and many school districts utilized general operating dollars to implement the law. In many cases, long term relationships with sheriffs, local governments, and school districts were strained. However, in the end, ensuring school safety was paramount and safe-school officers, including certified guardians, were available on opening day of school.

You called on the Legislative Budget Commission to redirect \$58 million from the Aaron Feis Guardian Program for additional school security. At the time of your request, only \$9 million of the \$67.5 million appropriated for the Guardian Program had been utilized by county sheriffs to establish guardian programs around the state.

President-Elect Galvano responded to your request by letter dated September 7<sup>th</sup> expressing his concern that time is needed to allow for the implementation of the Guardian Program. The initial budgets for the Guardian Program have not been reviewed by the Department of Education and the new school year is just under way. In addition, the recommendations of the Marjory Stone Stoneman Douglas Commission have not yet been made.

As stated in President-Elect Galvano's letter, a proposed amendment to transfer funds to be considered by the Legislative Budget Commission is not yet ripe. However, we do request that the remaining funds in the Guardian Program, once a calculation can be made, be transferred to school districts to offset the general operating dollars we had to expend to hire safe-school officers in order to meet the requirements of SB 7026. We could also use the funds to increase school hardening. For example, most of the costs of hardening schools are one-time costs for which the use of these dollars is both reasonable and wise. As noted above, the Legislature appropriated \$98 million in funds to harden both district run and charter run schools during the 2018 Legislative Session. These funds are helpful and welcomed, but given the number of schools and students, the funds under the original appropriation will be stretched thin. For example, the current appropriation only provides \$23,429 per school for hardening. Additional funds allocated to the school hardening program would add almost \$14,000 per school for hardening projects that could not be accomplished at the current funding levels.

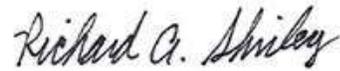
Superintendents also urge the Legislature to more closely examine the need to fund greater recurring expenses for the additional safe-school officers assigned to schools as a result of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act. Many districts were already transferring operating dollars from classrooms to school safety and security before the passage of the Act and many have increased transfers after its passage.

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We are thankful to you and the Legislature's leadership in addressing school safety after the tragedy in Parkland and the appropriation of over \$400 million to do so. We believe that all of the funds for school safety should be used in the year in which they were appropriated. The funds remaining in the Guardian Program should not revert to the state General Revenue fund.

We respectfully request that you pursue the transfer of funds at a more appropriate time and look forward to working with you to safeguard the safety of Florida's public school students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard A. Shirley".

Richard A. Shirley  
President