SUPPORTING STUDENT SAFETY AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Continue funding for school safety capital projects to allow for additional campus infrastructure enhancements.

- The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act provided a pool of categorical funding for districts to improve the physical safety at school sites. This funding has enabled districts to begin to address the upgrades needed to strengthen the physical security aspects at schools. Unfortunately, the costs associated with these enhancements are much greater than can be accomplished with the amount of funding made available in the original grant. Funding must be continued to support school safety capital projects allowing for additional campus infrastructure enhancements.

Maintain funding for the Mental Health Assistance Allocation to serve more students and families who need mental health services.

- The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act included funding for districts to provide Mental Health Assistance to students in need. This focus on providing proactive measures to meet the social, emotional, and psychological needs of our young people is long overdue. We must be able to maintain this critical element in providing a safe and secure environment for students. This includes increasing the investment of the Mental Health Assistance Allocation to hire additional school mental health professionals (such as school counselors, social workers, and psychologists), enhance collaborative community partnerships, expand wraparound services to schools, and provide student instruction and staff professional development in mental health.

ELIMINATING “ONE SIZE FITS ALL” FUNDING MINDSET

Increase Funding for Individual Student Needs

- Increase the Base Student Allocation by a minimum of 5% to provide enough total operating funding per-student to allow school districts to meet the individual learning needs of each student. Every student learns differently, and the one size fits all funding approach does not allow for school districts to focus on the students’ individual learning needs.
✓ Increase the weight of funding for categories 251, 252, and 253 on a per student basis.

✓ Provide adequate funding for the Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK) in order to raise the qualifications of instructional personnel.

✓ Stabilize the funding mechanisms in order to support property rich districts to eliminate the need for Tax Anticipation Notes (TAN).

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF HIGHLY QUALIFIED FLORIDA TEACHERS

✓ Fully fund a sustainable increase to the base teacher salary across the board for all teachers.

✓ Support innovative and meaningful approaches for the recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers through the Florida Department of Education’s (FLDOE) streamlining processes and requirements, pay performance, and initiating national recruitment fairs.

ENHANCING INVESTMENT IN FACILITIES

✓ Provide maintenance funding for school districts. Current funding barely covers required routine maintenance of facilities, leaving no excess for school districts to modernize school campuses to innovative 21st century learning environments.

SUPPORTING LOCAL DECISION MAKING

Support Non-Traditional Students

✓ Allow districts to wave the $45.00 fee for adult education, basic, or GED courses offered to students in jails, stockades, or Department of Juvenile Justice facilities.

Exceptional Student Education (ESE)

✓ Last fiscal year 2018-19 SDIRC received ESE funding in the amount of $5.7 million. However, our expenditures for ESE students totaled $6.3 million. The gap between funding and need is $600,000. We ask the legislature to increase the funding for Exceptional Student Education. Further, we ask the legislature to adequately fund ESE program categories 101, 102, and 103 students on separate program costs. Currently, the state is underfunding districts by lumping Category 101, 102, and 103, ESE students in the same program cost factor.

Transportation Funding

✓ The current amount of funding allocated to transportation expenses is inadequate. In fiscal year 2018-19, we received transportation funding in the amount of $2.9 million dollars. However, our expenditures for transportation totaled $5.5 million dollars. The gap between funding and need is $2,600,000. We ask the legislature to acknowledge the financial strain of funding student transportation and increase funding to cover the actual operating cost.