



Florida School Finance Officers Association, Inc.

July 10, 2017

Pam Stewart  
Commissioner of Education  
Turlington Building, Suite 1514  
325 West Gaines Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Commissioner Stewart,

First, I would like to thank you for your support of the Florida School Finance Council and your willingness to consider our input on the preK-12 education budget. The Finance Council reached unanimous agreement on the top three budget issues facing Florida's public schools for FY2019. The attached position paper provides a detailed justification for each priority and recommendation. These recommendations stand to benefit both traditional and charter public schools. It is our hope that you will give the Finance Council's priorities and recommendations serious consideration as the FY2019 state budget is being developed. Our top three priorities and recommendations are summarized below and supported by fact:

1. **Maintain Required Local Effort (RLE)** – The Legislature has reduced the RLE school tax rate for the past two years creating a structural imbalance in the state budget. As a result, Florida now faces an estimated \$1.3 billion budget gap for FY2019 in the General Revenue Fund. This recent practice of reducing the RLE to the “rolled back rate” must be discontinued. Failure to allow RLE local revenue to grow in a natural manner based on growth in the tax roll will leave Florida unable to adequately fund preK-12 education and places the state in a precarious position to weather future economic downturns.
2. **Restore Local Capital Outlay Millage (LCOM) Authority to 2.00 Mills**  
Diminished capital funding caused by a recession driven reduction of

25% to local school board capital improvement taxing authority has resulted in an alarming backlog of deferred maintenance across the state and compromised local efforts to meet capital demands including construction, technology, and school buses. This situation is exacerbated by the new requirement within HB 7069 to provide charter schools a pro-rata share of LCOM funding. Local school boards are held accountable by their respective communities and should have the authority to be responsive to capital demands. Authority must be restored to local school boards to levy up to 2.00 mills within their county to meet the capital needs of both traditional and charter public schools.

3. **Increase Teacher Salaries** in a meaningful sustainable manner that provides a livable wage commensurate with the role and responsibilities of this critical profession. Florida continues to trail the country in teacher salaries and will be severely challenged in the years ahead to adequately staff classrooms with qualified teachers given the expected national shortage.

Again, on behalf of the entire Finance Council, I would like thank you for this opportunity to express our concerns. It has been a pleasure working with Deputy Commissioner Linda Champion and her staff in this advisory role. I can be reached at (813) 794-2272 or by email at [oswinson@pasco.k12.fl.us](mailto:oswinson@pasco.k12.fl.us) if you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,



Olga Swinson, CPA, CGFM  
Chairman, Florida School Finance Council

cc: Linda Champion, Deputy Commissioner Division of Finance & Operations  
Florida School Finance Council Members