



**THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF  
PALM BEACH COUNTY, FL**

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February 23, 2018

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

Dear Governor Scott:

The horrific tragedy at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School February 14, 2018, weighs heavily on all public servants entrusted with safe guarding Florida's school children. Your press conference this morning and action plan to keep Florida students safe demonstrates your commitment to upholding this enormous responsibility. While student safety has always been of paramount importance for the School District of Palm Beach County (SDPBC), more can be done to protect our children. I wholly support your recommendation to increase Safe Schools funding by \$450 million across Florida's school districts. The current allocation of \$64.5 million falls woefully short of addressing the true need.

Our local School Board has a long track record of investing in school security. While the SDPBC receives just \$4.3 million in Safe Schools funding under the current State allocation, the SDPBC spends \$19 million per year to operate a fully accredited School Police Department staffed with 150 sworn law enforcement officers. Your mandate to provide a school resource officer in every public school is responsive to the demands of both our School Board and community. At least 75 new school resource officers will be required to meet this mandate in our district-operated schools. School districts, or sheriff departments in the case of counties without a school police force, will need to move quickly to recruit and train the additional officers by the start of the FY19 school year. It's imperative the Legislature act quickly to fund this initiative through the FY19 state budget process.

The \$50 million mental health component of your action plan is also critical to preventing another school violence tragedy. Funding constraints have limited the SDPBC's ability to provide a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) for our students. Licensed mental health care professionals are needed in our schools to provide comprehensive mental health services. The MTSS approach enables schools to promote mental wellness for all students, identify and address concerns before they escalate, and provide the intervention and wrap-around services to support students in need. System-wide school-based mental health intervention and case management is long overdue.

I appreciate the steps you have taken to compile your major action plan to keep Florida students safe in a collaborative, thoughtful, and expeditious manner. Our own Chief of Police, Lawrence Leon, was proud to be summoned to Tallahassee to confer with you on these life safety issues. I will be writing Senate President, Joe Negron, and House Speaker, Richard Corcoran, urging them to support this plan by approving a budget, which includes the required \$500 million by the close of the regular session on March 9, 2018.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance with the advocacy, adoption, or execution of this critical action plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert M. Avossa".

Robert M. Avossa, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

RMA/MJB:du

cc: School Board Members, SDPBC  
Michael J. Burke, Chief Financial Officer, SDPBC