



# FLORIDA SCHOOL FINANCE COUNCIL BUDGET PRIORITIES & RECOMMENDATIONS

FY2020

## *Priority 1 - Increase Teacher Salaries*

**Increase Teacher Salaries** in a meaningful sustainable manner that provides a livable wage commensurate with the role and responsibilities of this critical profession. Nearly 200,000 qualified teachers are needed to staff Florida's public school classrooms each year. **The success of our students and sheer ability to offer public education to Florida's children is dependent on attracting and retaining a workforce of teachers.** Further, research tells us effective teachers are the most important factor contributing to student achievement. Recognizing teachers are the essential element, the Finance Council recommends an investment in significantly improved teacher salaries through a recurring allocation. This can be accomplished by redirecting the \$233 million appropriation for the Best and Brightest Scholarship Program and, most importantly, maintaining the current Required Local Effort (RLE) school ad valorem tax rate and leverage an increasing statewide property tax roll to generate additional revenue for this purpose.

### *More Funding is Required to Avoid Major Crisis*

The Finance Council recognizes the investments needed to right Florida's funding course. Pre-K-12 public schools are huge and will have to be achieved over time. That said, considerable progress could be made for FY20 by truly prioritizing K-12 education in the upcoming legislative session by implementing a few practical funding recommendations:

1. **Maintain current Required Local Effort (RLE)** local school tax rate to help fund a meaningful increase to Base Student Allocation (BSA) as Florida's tax base grows year to year. The Legislative Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR) forecast indicates \$514.5 million can be generated by simply maintaining the current RLE. These funds are badly needed to help increase funding for teacher salaries and cover rising costs.
2. **Redirect \$233 million Best and Brightest Scholarship Program** funds to BSA or dedicated teacher salary categorical within the FEFP.
3. **Utilize portion of projected increase in state general revenue** to further increase BSA for FY20. Pre-K-12 Education is projected to represent 25% of the State's General Revenue Fund for FY20. Therefore, a minimum 25% of the estimated \$1.27 billion in General Revenue growth or \$318.3 million should be allocated to the FEFP.

These three recommendations in aggregate would provide \$1.065 billion in Pre-K12 Education funding for FY20. Setting aside roughly \$256 million to cover increased workload and enrollment, \$809 million would be available to increase the BSA which has remained relatively flat the past three years. Our proposed investment would increase the BSA \$281.84 to fund teacher salary increases.

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	<b>Proposed 2019-20</b>
<b>BSA</b>	\$4,031.77	\$4,154.45	\$4,160.71	\$4,203.95	\$4,204.42	\$4,486.26
<i>Increase Over Prior Year</i>		\$122.68	\$6.26	\$43.24	\$0.47	\$281.84
<i>% Increase Over Prior Year</i>		3.04%	0.15%	1.04%	0.01%	6.70%

## Priority 2 - Adequately Fund Safety Measures

**Adequately Fund Safety Measures** to cover the full cost of security and mental health professionals, as well as, campus hardening capital improvements. The long list of safety reforms included in the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act (SB 7026) require a substantial investment in order to be implemented with fidelity. Provisions must be made for both capital and operating school expenditures to help ensure every student is provided a safe learning environment as mandated by this historic piece of legislation.

**The Finance Council recommends the allocation of additional funding to help fulfill the legislative intent of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act as follows:**

1. **Increase Safe Schools** Categorical allocation by \$100 million to narrow funding gap associated with mandate to staff one "safe school officer" per school.
2. **Double current Mental Health Assistance Allocation** of \$69.2 million to reduce ratio of students per mental health professional for the second year of this program.
3. **Identify ongoing capital revenue stream** to fund school campus hardening projects. The Finance Council has sought a restoration of local capital outlay millage authority back to 2.00 mills for several years. Given the demands on state PECO funds, the SBOE should reconsider supporting this restoration of taxing authority to local school boards or identify an alternate revenue source.

**About the Council** - The Florida School Finance Council serves as an advisory committee to the Commissioner of Education on school funding and business issues. The Council is comprised of 18 members representing small, medium and large school districts and 3 ex-officio members. The Council represents a diverse mix of school districts across the state in terms of size, student demographics, population density, and region. For more information or questions, please contact:

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