

Board Members
Paula D. Wright M.Ed., Chairman | Ashley Smith Juarez Vice-Chairman
Becki Couch | Cheryl Grymes | Lori Hershey | Warren Jones | Scott Shine

Superintendent of Schools
Patricia S. Willis, Ed.D.

July 25, 2017

The Honorable Jay Fant
Chairman, Duval Legislative Delegation
4114 Herschel Street, Suite 104
Jacksonville, FL 32210-2200

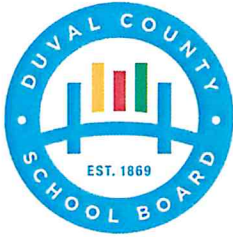
Dear Chair Fant,

Thank you for your service to your community and your leadership in chairing the Duval Legislative Delegation. I pen this letter to you, in response to Rep. Jason Fischer's letter requesting that the Joint Legislative Auditing Committee direct the Auditor General to perform an operational audit after receiving the Representative's query to the Joint Legislative Auditing Committee from a member of the media.

First, and most important, let me assure you that the academic, social, and the emotional needs of our students will not be negatively impacted as a result of the unfunded initiatives disclosed at the end of the 2016-17 school budget process. Factually and emphatically, the Duval County School Board is not "indulging in irresponsible budget practices," as claimed by our former colleague. The school district is not in financial distress nor has the district even approached dipping below the statutorily required 3% reserve. Rep. Fischer failed to communicate with board members to gain an understanding of our district's financial status.

The board and superintendent have been transparent in detailing all of the unfunded initiatives. We have been forthcoming to the public in sharing the information, and deliberate in achieving consensus for funding programs and initiatives for the 2017-18 school year. Indeed, our board members, when informed about the unfunded initiatives in the 2016-17 budget by our Superintendent, openly discussed the findings at our July 10, 2017 School Board Meeting and at a convened Audit Committee Meeting on July 18, 2017 to ensure transparency to our public. We have never taken our "eyes off" of ensuring the financial solvency of our school district.

As noted above, the district's expenditures related to the unfunded initiatives did not cause the district's fund balance to fall below the statutorily required 3% threshold. Therefore, Rep. Fischer's concern about the district's expenditures has caused "our children...to suffer" is unfounded. Instead the district's expenditures provided essential support for our children's academic achievement which has led to improved performance beyond Representative Fischer's tenure.



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Notably, the Auditor General just left our district after completing the 2015-16 operational audit. Based on the above, we respectfully ask that Representative Fisher's request to have the Auditor General return to our district to perform another operational audit be withdrawn.

Once again, thank you for your leadership and your service to the State. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me directly.

With Warm Regards,

Paula D. Wright, M.Ed.
Duval County School Board Chairman

cc: Duval Legislative Delegation
Senator Aaron Bean, Vice Chair
Senator Audrey Gibson
Representative Cord Byrd
Representative Clay Yarborough
Representative Tracie Davis
Representative Kimberly Daniels
Representative Jason Fischer

Joint Legislative Auditing Committee
Senator Debbie Mayfield, Chairman
Representative Daniel Raulerson, Vice Chair
Senator Dennis Baxley
Senator Audrey Gibson
Senator Kathleen Passidomo
Senator Perry Thurston
Representative Tracie Davis
Representative Randy Fine
Representative Joe Gruters
Representative Roy Hardemon
Representative Cyndi Stevenson