

## Our Concerns with SB 7000, SB 7002, and SB 7004

The Florida Citizens Alliance along with Moms for Liberty Florida Legislative Committee and Citizens Defending Freedom is greatly concerned about some of the language within SB 7000, SB 7002 and SB 7004. We understand in the era of post HB 1 some updates do need to take place with respect to the education code that pertains to school districts. Please see our concerns below and suggested action.

### **SB 7000:**

Lines 179-183: What are the three emergent literacy training courses?

Lines 197-198: Why does the State of Florida need another professional learning system?

Lines 530-547: Who is doing the annual performance evaluation? Can the public see a copy of this evaluation?

Lines 635-670: This is a deletion. What is this being replaced with? Evaluations of teachers should have common benchmarks for high, medium and low performers, especially with some now receiving multi-year contracts. Otherwise, local unions will likely turn evaluations meaningless. We suggest that school districts identify no more than 20% of teachers as high performing with multi-year contracts. 20% should be the benchmark for high performing teachers.

Line 760-769: Who is paying for this training?

Line 782: Why are we lowering this standard?

Pros: Reduces power of unions. This bill also ensures the teacher certificates are up to state standards.

### **SB 7002:**

Lines 218-221: Strongly oppose. This is vague but as worded is a blank check for all school boards to ignore all SBOE rules for all chapters 1000-1014. Does this remove public input and encourage closed meetings? Doesn't this contradict public meeting laws? Is there a definition of "requirements for rules" to formulate an informed opinion about this change? This either needs to be amended to include more context or removed completely.

Lines 377-405: Strongly oppose. Removes requirement for Internal auditor. Many of these counties are billion(s) of dollars' worth of bureaucracy and overhead. The legislature should require an external annual forensic audit for \$.5 Billion or more of total budget for School districts and once every two years for smaller counties. Why would we remove accountability?

Line 413-417: Strongly oppose. This would undermine the FL Constitutional authority of Boards and give it to Superintendents. About 2/3rds Superintendents work at the will of the board or are elected by the people. As worded, this will create lots of mischief and chaos between School boards and all superintendents.

Line 580; 669-672: Oppose. Is the intent to go paperless? What about low-income families who do not have access to the web? Can we incorporate line 669-672 into 580? This language specifies availability to parents. All information should be publicly available to all residents of the county.

Line 723- 725: Oppose: This needs clarity. It seems to remove student info protection on 3rd party contacts. This must include parental knowledge with parental opt-in.

Line 777-778: This is vague language. What questions and how often?

Lines 890-1248 Oppose as is. Needs clarification of intent and accountability oversight. It appears this section is intended to give school districts much greater flexibility in Capital investments to move to shorter term leases. Given HB 1, this could be a good thing as public schools will likely lose significant students to private and alternate schools and will need to reduce capital bricks and mortar schools' capacity. What is the accountability measure? As school districts could easily lose 50% of enrolled students over next 3-4 years the legislature and DOE need strong accountability measures. Monopolies are notorious for super slow reaction to competitive pressures.

Lines 1246-1247: What does this mean? Very vague

Lines 1838-1840: Who is funding this construction? How would this be budgeted?

Pros: This bill gives more school board responsibilities and flexibility to manage excess infrastructure capacity but there needs to be some overall accountability legislative oversight measurement. This bill also allows students to carry things like an EpiPen, asthma inhalers, and diabetic equipment on their person with a written letter from their parent/guardian if the student has a valid prescription or doctor's written authorization.

## **SB 7004:**

Lines 187-195: Why are we eliminating performance requirements for students already struggling and not on track to graduate? How would we track success?

Lined 204-218: Why are we eliminating? Are charter schools going to use public school resources?

Lines 282-295: VPK should be completely private with minimal to no state regulation, Parents who vote with their attendance or eave are the accountability. This language leaves it very vague regarding School District role and responsibility and will cause lots of mischief and chaos. Is this giving public school districts less regulation than private VPK? If so, we don't agree.

Lines 402-404: This is lowering the standards. We would be okay with this if we replaced this testing with the new progress monitoring system.

Lines 432-434: This is lowering the standards. We would be okay with this if we replaced this testing with the new progress monitoring system.

Lines 531-536: Leave recess alone. Pediatric studies have shown that having the 20 minutes of consecutive recess is good for the student's mental health.

Lines. 611-635: Why would we eliminate reporting of high performing schools? This should be continued for consistency across school districts and transparency reasons to parents.

Lines 631-649: Can we add the curriculum transparency initiative? These lines cite 1006.28 which also states that teacher manuals are exempt from public review. Simply strike out excluded and underline included. Strongly support residents in textbook reviews have access to teachers guides.

Line 660: Is there a new date? How much time? Will this be determined by FLDOE?

Line 669-674: Does not give students and families accountability for lost or damaged materials. This should be removed.

Line 688-689: This is too vague. Same with line 660.

Lines 708-720: Strongly Oppose. This will undermine the adoption process of textbooks. The left is constantly coming up with new terms and concepts. For example, two years ago SEL was not as big as it is now so if the requirements that the DOE is putting out to publishers must be two years prior to the adoption of textbooks, the DOE would have missed SEL in those requirements. This needs to be amended.

Line 772-774: Why would school districts NOT purchase enough materials to adequately ensure all students have their own instructional materials?

Lines 786-787: This gives the Superintendent more power and undermines this FL Constitutional School Boards.

Lines 848-851: This is lowering the standards. We would be okay with this if we replaced this testing with the new progress monitoring system. We are okay with eliminating the concordant testing aspect. 17 of the tests on the DOE site are Common Core compliant. We would support restructuring the DOE list to be only CLT and verifiable non-common core tests.

Lines 907-932 and lines 1005-1022: There are several places in this bill that removes accountability from the Commissioner of Education. Why?

Lines: 1036-1038: Strongly oppose. Allows parents to override the school district for their child to advance to the 4th grade even though the child scored a level 1 on the reading assessment. While there is an argument that retention needs to be balanced with parental rights, an illiterate child allowed to advance will not only never recover but will have a significant negative impact on the 4th grade class. Studies show that level 1 and 2 students should be retained for their own benefit and to prevent the negative impact on the 4th grade students. Standards are in place for a reason. This needs to be removed.

Line 1066: Strongly oppose. While this is not new to legislature, Level 3 is considered average on the grading scale. The statute should be amended to retain all level 1 and level 2 students with cannot read at levels 1 and 2.

Lines 1080-1085: Strongly oppose for same reasons as lines 1036-1038

Lines 1250-1259: How are we measuring then? Where is the bar?

Lines 1283-1295: This reads as if we are okay with a school having a C-grade or lower for at least four years and removes the deadline for improvement. Can we amend to lessen the turnaround time? Additionally, if a charter school needs to come in and take over a failing school, this should involve stakeholders. The charter school organization would need to “sell” their initiative in a special town hall meeting to ensure they, too, are not failing and this is in the best interest of all the students and families affected by this transition.

As previously mentioned, this bill, in many areas, removes the requirements for passing a reading and math end of course exam for high school graduation. Even though we would agree there should be less testing, this would allow more students to graduate that are not qualified to receive a diploma. We already see this with the current system in place. Florida Citizens Alliance has done plenty of research on school/county grades. Fifty percent (50%) of our high school students cannot read or do math at grade level based on US News and World Report assessments yet our graduate rates are 90+%. Cut Scores need to be significantly increased and diplomas need to guarantee students have basic academic skills.

Signed,

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