



**RICK SCOTT**  
GOVERNOR

March 23, 2018

Dear Superintendents and School Board Members:

Last month, seventeen innocent lives were lost during a shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Broward County. Since then, our entire state has come together to find ways to prevent a tragedy like this from ever happening again, including the immediate need to increase safety at each school in Florida. Immediately following the shooting, I convened emergency meetings in Tallahassee with education officials, mental health experts and law enforcement experts to develop a course of action to improve school safety. These meetings, in concert with the work of the Florida Legislature, produced a new law that I signed on March 9, 2018, SB 7026, the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act.

Working with the Legislature, the upcoming state budget makes historic investments in our schools to ensure that districts have the resources needed to keep our students and teachers safe. The Securing Florida's Future budget for Fiscal Year 2018-2019 provides an additional \$484 million increase for operating funding for K-12 public schools. For the third straight year, per-pupil funding in Florida is at a record high, \$7,408 per-pupil. Additionally, the budget, along with the funding provided in SB 7026, provides hundreds of millions of dollars and the flexibility needed to make each school safer.

During my time in office, we have made funding education a top priority. State funding Florida's K-12 public schools has increased by \$3.2 billion or 37 percent since 2011. During the same time, the local contribution to schools has risen at a slower pace – increasing by nearly \$1.3 billion or 16.5 percent. Although student enrollment has only grown seven percent in the same amount of time, we have invested an additional \$4.5 billion in state and local funding into our K-12 public schools, a 27 percent increase. In fact, as of last year, school districts have reserve funding of more than \$2 billion statewide, and a vast majority of districts have reserves in excess of five percent.

There is nothing more important than making our schools safer, and we have record amounts of funding to accomplish this goal. Today, I wanted to inform you of the progress we have made in implementing this important law, as well as some of the highlights of the new law, and the deadlines each school district must meet.

- By May 1, 2018, the Florida Department of Education (DOE) will hire a Director for their newly created Office of Safe Schools.
- Upon SB 7026 becoming law, DOE immediately began working to implement active shooter training so each teacher, student, faculty member and school safety officer knows what to do during a crisis. This training must be done at least every semester.
- By July 1, 2018, superintendents must designate a district School Safety Specialist.
- By August 1, 2018, each school district must complete a security risk assessment for each public school campus. The assessment must be conducted in consultation with local law enforcement. Although the \$99 million in funding for school hardening will be distributed as quickly as possible, school districts should use existing funding to make any critical safety improvements immediately.
- Before the start of the 2018-2019 school year, DOE will begin to identify a security consulting firm for the independent, third-party review of the Florida Safe Schools Assessment Tool, as required by the new law.
- By September 1, 2018, each school should establish a threat assessment team with expertise in mental health counseling, academic instruction, law enforcement and school administration that will meet monthly to review any potential threats to students and staff at the school.
- By July 1, 2018, I expect each school board, in coordination with their County Sheriff to determine how many people they intend to train using the Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program. This program is 100 percent voluntary. Once participation decisions have been made, DOE will work with my office and the Legislature to redirect any unused funding from this program to hire additional school officers.
- In the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act, Florida schools were provided \$97.5 million to hire additional school safety officers. My expectation is that there is at least one school safety officer at each school at the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year. It is my understanding that according to the most recent data before the tragedy at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, approximately 1,500 law enforcement officers were working in our schools.

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- Before the start of the 2018-2019 school year, DOE will establish a youth mental awareness and assistance training program to train school personnel to better identify signs of mental illness in students and how to seek the proper treatment.
- In the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act, Florida schools were provided \$69 million to establish or expand school-based mental health care. Our expectation is that each student in Florida has access to a mental health professional at school by the 2018-2019 school year. Plans must be submitted to DOE by August 1, 2018.

I am certain that you will agree that there is nothing more important than the safety of our children. I encourage you to keep DOE informed on the necessary steps your district is taking to fully implement the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act. It is also important for you to proactively work with your local law enforcement agencies on these measures. If you have any questions, please contact the Florida Department of Education at [safeschools@fldoe.org](mailto:safeschools@fldoe.org).

Sincerely,



Rick Scott  
Governor

cc: Secretary Mike Carroll, Department of Children and Families  
Secretary Christy Daly, Department of Juvenile Justice  
Commissioner Pam Stewart, Department of Education  
Florida Sheriffs Association  
Florida Police Chiefs Association  
Florida Association of Counties