



*Florida House of Representatives  
Chair Manny Diaz, Jr. and Vice Chair Bob Cortes  
Representatives, District 103 and 30*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
October 2, 2017

**Contact:** Murphy Kennedy  
Phone: (850) -717-5030

**DIAZ, CORTES WANT FLORIDA SCHOOLS READY FOR STUDENTS FROM PUERTO RICO**  
*~Representatives Manny Diaz and Bob Cortes are joining other Florida legislators in requesting Florida Education Commissioner Pam Stewart to prepare for an influx of new students from Puerto Rico.~*

**Altamonte Springs, Fla.** — Today, State Representatives Manny Diaz and Bob Cortes, along with other members of the Florida Legislature, sent a letter to Florida Commissioner of Education Pam Stewart that outlines a number of requests to help accommodate the large number of new Florida residents expected from Puerto Rico following the devastating hit the island took from Hurricanes Irma and Maria last month. Governor Rick Scott issued an executive order earlier today declaring a state of emergency in all 67 Florida counties in response to the catastrophe in Puerto Rico.

“It is extremely important for Florida to be prepared for a large number of evacuees from Puerto Rico,” said Cortes. “So many Puerto Rican families have literally lost everything, and we must stand ready to do everything possible to help their children transition as seamlessly as possible to a new school and learning environment.”

The legislators’ requests include waiving penalties for class size infractions and implementing a process that would guarantee that new students from Puerto Rico are counted in school funding formulas. They are also asking for a review of the temporary teacher certification process so that Florida schools have the opportunity to employ teachers from Puerto Rico who have been displaced.

“It is impossible to overstate the impact of these storms on Puerto Rico,” said Diaz. “Students and teachers are unable to access records, and it could be many months before schools there are able to reopen. We believe the actions we are requesting will allow Florida schools to be ready to embrace the students who will be coming here with their families to start over.”

The letter to Stewart is attached.

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October 02, 2017

Florida Education Commissioner Pam Stewart  
Turlington Building, Suite 1514  
325 West Gaines Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Commissioner Stewart:

As you know, there has been considerable devastation caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria in Puerto Rico. Florida is home to many that have moved here from the island and we are anticipating a rush of families that will impact our schools and early learning facilities.

Not only must Florida be prepared for the influx of students but we must allow schools to continue to implement their plan for a successful year.

We request the following from the Department of Education for our K-12 schools:

1. Implement an extended or alternative process to guarantee students from Puerto Rico are counted and schools receive the accurate funding for the Fall FTE survey period;
2. Suspend occupancy limitations lower than the Certificate of Occupancy to accommodate increased demand for students;
3. Waive any penalties for class size infractions in districts affected by the arrival of students from Puerto Rico;
4. Review the process for students who currently don't have transcripts; and
5. Review the process for expedited temporary certification for teachers coming from Puerto Rico. This will provide our schools the flexibility of using these teachers.

We also request the following for our Early Learning and VPK providers:

1. Temporarily waive the VPK classroom size/teacher ratio requirements;
2. Temporarily waive the CDA requirement for SR classrooms set to go into effect after January 2018;
3. Temporarily waive the immunization and birth certificate requirements for enrollment into child care if relocated Americans do not have the paperwork due to the Hurricanes;
4. Provide temporary funding for relocated Americans for child care that would not be subject to local match requirements.

We believe these requests will help make the transitions of students from Puerto Rico manageable for our school districts and help ease displaced students back to their education.

Sincerely,



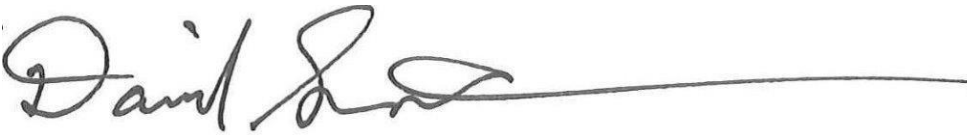
Representative Manny Diaz Jr.  
District 103  
Chairman of PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee



Representative Mike La Rosa  
House District 42  
Chairman, Tourism and Gaming Control Subcommittee



Representative Bob Cortes  
House District 30



Representative David Santiago  
House District 27



Representative Rene "Coach P" Plasencia  
House District 50

CC: Governor Rick Scott

CC: Kevin Reilly, Executive Office of the Governor

CC: Tanya Cooper, Department of Education

CC: Robert Runcie, Superintendent of Broward County Schools

CC: Alberto M. Carvahlo, Superintendent of Miami-Dade County Schools

CC: Dr. Debra Pace, Superintendent of Osceola County Schools

CC: Dr. Barbara Jenkins, Superintendent of Orange County Schools

CC: Walt Griffin, Superintendent of Seminole County Schools

CC: James T. Russell, Superintendent of Volusia County Schools