



**RICK SCOTT**  
GOVERNOR

April 20, 2018

The Honorable Betsy DeVos  
Secretary  
United States Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

Nearly eight years ago, when I became Governor of the great State of Florida, I was determined to make Florida the best place to live, work and receive a world class education. We have achieved tremendous success on all fronts, and I could not be more proud of our state's public education system, particularly in light of last week's National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) announcement. As you know, NAEP is widely recognized as a strong indicator of students' preparedness for future success, and its results demonstrate that the student-focused policies we have implemented are working.

During my time in office, education funding in Florida has increased dramatically. In fact, this year's Securing Florida's Future budget invests \$21.1 billion in state and local funding for Florida K-12 schools. This budget provides the highest total funding, state funding and per-student funding for K-12 schools in Florida's history. This equates to \$7,408 per student in Florida - an increase of \$101.50 per student over current year funding. Because of our hard work, this is the sixth straight year that we have made record investments in state funding for K-12.

Florida Education Commissioner Pam Stewart and her team at the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) have been steadfastly working on Florida's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) state plan. After revising the state's original plan based on feedback from U.S. Department of Education officials, FDOE is today submitting an updated version with a waiver.

This plan has been crafted with one central focus - to truly serve the best interests of all Florida students in our efforts to increase their performance, and as such I encourage you to accept our recommendation.

There has never been a better time for education in Florida. We continue to make significant strides and fund K-12 public education at record levels, and this plan includes strategies that have proven effective. State-level data demonstrate marked progress, and the NAEP results underscore the effectiveness of our state's policies, as you noted in the U.S. Department of Education's press release regarding NAEP:

*"One bright spot in today's report is Florida, where Sunshine State students are bucking the national trend, showing significant improvement in 4th and 8th grade math and in 8th grade reading. Both low and high performers in Florida demonstrated that improvement, again bucking the national trend and narrowing the achievement gap.*

*"Florida leaders, administrators, and, most importantly, teachers are to be commended for their continued efforts on behalf of students. Florida has been at the forefront of bold, comprehensive education reform for decades. From accountability, to literacy, to teacher certification and recognition, to providing parents more freedom to select the learning environment that best fits their students' needs, Florida is rethinking education.*

*"Florida's results show what is possible when we focus on individual students. This Administration is committed to working with States and communities across our country to bring about the much-needed change our students deserve."*

We appreciate your acknowledgement of Florida's students, teachers, administrators and education leaders for these unrivaled accomplishments, the most compelling of which I have included below.

- Florida made more progress than any other state in the nation in 2017, as the only state that showed significant improvement in 3 of the 4 NAEP assessments administered in 2017.
- Florida students outperformed the nation in Grade 4 Reading, Grade 8 Reading, and Grade 4 Mathematics.
- All of Florida's student subgroups significantly outperformed their national peers in Grade 4 Mathematics.
- All of Florida's student subgroups outperformed their national peers in Grade 4 Reading, and many of them significantly outperformed their national peers.

The Honorable Betsy DeVos  
April 20, 2018  
Page Three

- Florida is the only state that showed significant improvement in Grade 4 and Grade 8 Mathematics between 2015 and 2017.
- Florida's grade 4 Hispanic students rank #1 among the 50 states in reading and mathematics.
- Florida's Hispanic students, Black students, students eligible for free/reduced lunch, and students with disabilities rank #1 among the 50 states in Grade 4 Mathematics performance.

This success is not a coincidence. It is the result of hard work and purposeful decision making, and I am confident that this ESSA plan and waiver is precisely what Florida needs to remain on the positive trajectory that has contributed to our students' nationally recognized performance.

I appreciate your support and look forward to your approval of Florida's plan for implementing ESSA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Scott", with a large, stylized flourish at the beginning.

Rick Scott  
Governor