September 6, 2012

The Honorable Rick Scott  
Governor of Florida  
Tallahassee, Florida  
VIA: Rick.Scott@eog.myflorida.com

RE: Selection Criteria for new Commissioner of Education

Dear Governor Scott:

We represent hundreds of thousands of parents and voters through community groups who are deeply concerned about the selection of Florida’s next Commissioner of Education. During the month of August, many groups and individuals submitted well-thought-out points for consideration to the Board of Education. We are perplexed and dismayed that none of these suggestions are reflected in the Board’s proposed criteria. The criteria the BOE has chosen to consider this week is focused on promoting unproven reforms, not what’s best for children.

You have said that you understand the importance of public education. We want to take you at your word. Our suggested criteria present a sharp contrast to those offered by the BOE. They are as follows:

Florida needs a commissioner who
(1) will collaborate with parents, educators, community organizations, and local elected officials to restructure the flawed accountability system into a credible system that informs and improves learning, rather than punishes; (2) is committed to ensuring that districts eliminate zero tolerance and implement fair, supportive and non-exclusionary disciplinary practices, in keeping with Florida’s groundbreaking 2009 state law (3) will promote the wise use of limited public dollars to support teaching and learning practices that prepare all students for college and career success, rather than an excessive focus on narrow definitions of achievement through testing (4) will maintain the Task Force on Accountability for Exceptional Education, Special Needs, and English Language Learners as an advisory board; and (5) is free of any real or perceived conflicts of interest with regard to privatization, test publishing, or lobbying.

Governor Scott, actions speak louder than words. Florida’s children deserve a Commissioner of Education who reflects criteria put forth by the empowered and engaged parents and community groups of Florida. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Mark McGriff, Citizens For Strong Schools, Mark McGriff
Delio G. Diaz, Executive Director Dade Association of School Administrators ESOL Leadership Council, Zayra Climes-Lenchus, Chair, Broward County Public Schools
Eileen Segal, President, Florida PTA
Christine Bramuchi, FundEducationNow.org,
Colleen Wood, 50th No More, Save Duval Schools
Dr Joaquin Garcia, Hispanic Education Coalition
Julio Alva, District #3 Directo, LULAC Florida
Lourdes Bravo, Director Educators for Inclusive Leadership LULAC Florida Council
Edna Canino, President, Florida Embassy LULAC
Roberto E. Canino, International Ambassador, LULAC
Rosa Castro Feinberg, Ph. D., LULAC State Commissioner for Education Policy and Special Populations,
Miami-Dade
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Rochelle Cisneros, Special Assistant on Education Policy, Florida LULAC Embassy Council #7220 & Florida LULAC Commission on Education Policy and Special Populations  
Nancy Noonan, Marions United  
Shirley B. Johnson, PHD, Education Chair, NAACP Florida State Conference  
Maria Acosta, President, National Association of Cuban American Educators,  
Rita Solnet, Parents Across America Florida, TestingIsNotTeaching  
Gepsie M. Metellus, Executive Director, Sant La, Haitian Neighborhood Center, Inc.

Cc: Florida Board of Education Members  
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