

## Talking Points: Republican Measures Attack Public Education in Florida

### Background

There is a Republican-led onslaught against public education in Florida. Not only has funding for successful college scholarship programs been cut, new measures are proposed to further gut public school funding by promoting charter schools in their stead. GOP measures are also proposing to remove long-standing restrictions against the use of public monies to fund private-, sectarian- and religion-based schools.

### Republicans Weaken Our Public Schools with Controversial Legislation

- Republican cuts in education have reduced participation in the successful Bright Futures Scholarship program in half, primarily affecting lower income students.
- H.B. 7069, Republicans put charter schools on equal footing with traditional public schools, forcing them to equally share state funds even though public schools outnumber charter school populations by 10-to-1 margin.
- H.B. 7069 means Charter schools may now receive \$185.19/per student on a pure per capita basis, while public schools could receive approx. \$20.00/student.
- Republicans do not care about Florida's 2.5M children enrolled in public schools. They are taking taxes for public schools and giving them to charter schools; and diverting money earmarked for school construction and maintenance to cover new charter school costs.
- GOP-led Constitutional Revision Commission looking at putting proposals on 2018 ballot, blowing open the path to charter-, private-, and religious school expansion at the expense of traditional public schools in every conceivable way:
  - *Proposal 4.* Removes prohibition against public funds for church schools.
  - *Proposal 45.* Places education decisions in hands of legislators rather than qualified School Boards.
  - *Proposal 71.* Allows the FL Legislature to authorize new charter schools, currently decided by presumably far more qualified School Boards.

### Democrats Fight to Save 2.5M Children in Public Schools

Florida Democrats fought against every one of the above measures on behalf of our public schools. Dems voted against H.B. 7069 but were outvoted by the gerrymandered-GOP majority. Democrats uniformly opposed the measure since it would weaken struggling schools even further by pulling students away, stating the *money would be better spent improving those schools*, not by destroying them. Outnumbered 10-to-1 on the Constitutional Revision Commission, Democrats must create more public awareness of the draconian measures proposed for the 2018 ballot, including the move to eliminate barriers to using state money to fund private-, sectarian- and religion-based schools.