



## Hamilton County School District

5683 US Highway 129 South – Suite 1  
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Phone: 386.792.1228 – Fax: 386.792.3681

**Rex L. Mitchell, Superintendent**

**School Board Members**  
Cheryl McCall – District 1  
Gary Godwin – District 2  
Saul Speights – District 3  
Johnny Bullard – District 4  
Suzette Wiggins – District 5

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### NEWS RELEASE

## The School District of Hamilton County Hamilton County Public Schools files lawsuit against HB 7069

On Monday, October 16<sup>th</sup> in Tallahassee, the School Board of Hamilton County, Florida joined 12 other Florida school boards in filing a lawsuit challenging portions of House Bill (HB) 7069. Governor Rick Scott signed HB 7069 into law in June 2017. The School Board opposes the following named provisions under this new law:

- District school boards are mandated to share a portion of their **discretionary capital outlay millage revenues** with charter schools regardless of the need.
  - o Corporate charter schools can take property taxes from local school boards to build and/or renovate schools they own and operate for-profit. If the charter school ceases to operate, the taxpayers do not recoup the buildings.
- District school boards are **forced to surrender their Constitutional authority** to operate, control, and supervise the local public schools in their respective jurisdictions.
  - o This provision allows a charter school to open without the locally elected district school board having authority to ensure that it is efficient, safe, secure or of high quality for its students.
- District school boards are improperly restricted in their **federal authority over Title I funds**.
  - o This provision threatens services to support the needs of students in poverty. It limits the ability of a school district to provide districtwide services such as summer reading programs, tutoring and parental engagement initiatives.
- District school boards are mandated to enter into a **standard charter contract** with charter school operators.
  - o This mandates the use of standard “one size fits all” contracts with terms forced upon a local district school board by the state and by unelected charter school operators.
- An authorized **charter school system may serve as local education agencies in direct competition with public school districts**.
  - o It allows charters to operate as public schools over which the local electorate that is funding them has no authority to change leadership or influence policy.

**“Changing Lives Through Quality Education”**

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- **“Schools of Hope” program** was created.
  - o A School of Hope is a charter school that can be built to address various needs in low-income neighborhoods but, the for-profit charter schools don’t have to serve that community and they don’t have to hire certified teachers.

The legal challenge centers on whether the law oversteps the School Board’s constitutional authority to oversee its local district. It also addresses whether it is legal to force a district to share capital dollars with charter schools.

Due to the public importance to these issues, the 13 school districts participating in the lawsuit have petitioned the Court for an immediate review and requested the challenged provisions be deemed unconstitutional and not be permitted to be implemented. Once a judge has been assigned to the lawsuit, the 13 districts look forward to a speedy resolution.

“Our major concern with HB 7069 is the fact that it eliminated two years of a turnaround plan for Hamilton County High School and placed the school in position to be managed by an outside entity beginning in the 2018-19 school year,” said Superintendent of Schools Rex L. Mitchell. “We believe this is a challenge to the Superintendent’s and School Board’s constitutional authority to operate, control, and supervise the local public schools.”