

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 4, 2021

The Honorable Ian Rosenblum
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Programs
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Mr. Rosenblum,

We write in response to your October 25th letter threatening “enforcement actions” against the Florida Department of Education for its decision to limit state education funding to the school boards of Alachua County and Broward County. It is unconscionable that the U.S. Department of Education is attempting to further politicize school funding in order to subsidize the salaries of school board officials who directly defied the Governor’s orders prohibiting mask mandates in the state.

The Department of Education’s grants totaling nearly \$569,000 to the Alachua County and Broward County school boards under the Project to Support America’s Families and Educators goes against the orders of Governor DeSantis while a court case is ongoing. Moreover, the authority for the grant program cited by the Department of Education is a gross misuse of funds that are intended for National Activities for School Safety. Section 4631(a)(1)(B) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act states that the Secretary “may use a portion of such funds to carry out other activities to improve students’ safety and well-being, during and after the school day, under this section directly or through grants, contracts, or cooperative agreements with public or private entities or individuals, or other Federal agencies, such as providing technical assistance to States and local educational agencies carrying out activities under this section or conducting a national evaluation.”

In the Department of Education’s notice of the grant, the Department states, “[t]he funding will help districts keep these measures in place and maintain district and school stability despite the financial penalty. Alachua County Public Schools (ACPS) will use these funds to stabilize district staffing and compensation levels necessary to keep CDC recommended strategies in place, promoting student safety for its 29,761 students.”

How do school board members’ salaries improve students’ safety and well-being?

In your letter, you cite section 8522 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended, which states, “A State shall not take into consideration payments under this Act...in determining...the amount of State aid, with respect to free public education of children.”


Your letter suggests that grants to pay the salaries of school board members affect the “free public education of children.” In no way should these grants be construed to affect children’s education.

We urge you to immediately end the retaliation against Florida, the Florida Department of Education, and our children.

Sincerely,



Kat Cammack
Member of Congress



W. Gregory Steube
Member of Congress



Daniel Webster
Member of Congress



Byron Donalds
Member of Congress



Bill Posey
Member of Congress



Gus Bilirakis
Member of Congress



Scott Franklin
Member of Congress