

Dr. Steve Gallon III, Board Member

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SUBJECT: SCHOOL BOARD ENDORSEMENT RECOGNIZING NOVEMBER AS NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH

COMMITTEE: INNOVATION, GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS, & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: INFORMED, ENGAGED, AND EMPOWERED STAKEHOLDERS

Miami-Dade County Public Schools remains committed to meeting the educational, personal, and social needs of all students. In doing so, it recognizes the unique needs of children in foster care and of those that have been adopted. Children and youth who are provided the stability and support found through adoption, experience better outcomes than their peers who leave government care without the foundation of a permanent family environment. Thus, parents who adopt children seek to provide them with a loving home and family which includes everything that makes a home a loving place to be and a family that is an accepting group. This desire includes the exchange of family traditions, the sharing of faith, and of memory making moments. It also means accepting the child for who they are - even their faults. Understanding that the child has a history and heritage that also needs to be respected and embraced.

For over two decades, National Adoption Month has been promoted and celebrated every November in communities across the country to promote discourse and engagement around foster children and those who have been adopted. Many national, state, and local agencies as well as foster care agencies and adoptive family groups help spread the word through programs, events, and activities that help raise awareness for thousands of children and youth in foster care who are waiting for permanent, loving families.

National Adoption Month is an initiative of the Children's Bureau with a goal to increase national awareness and bring attention to the need for permanent families for children and youth in the U.S. foster care system. Each year, this initiative focuses its outreach and awareness-raising efforts around a new adoption-related theme. For the 2017 National Adoption Month initiative, the theme "*Teens Need Families, No Matter What*" highlights the importance of identifying well-prepared and committed families for the thousands of teenagers in foster care.

The first launch on bringing awareness to adoption was in 1976, when Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis announced an Adoption Week to promote awareness of the need for adoptive families for children in foster care. In 1984, President Reagan proclaimed the first National Adoption Week, and in 1995, President Clinton expanded the awareness week to the entire month of November.

In November of 2000, sponsors worked with law firms, state foster care agencies, child advocates, and courts to complete hundreds of foster care adoptions in 9 jurisdictions nationwide. In 2001, 17 jurisdictions participated, and in 2002, the Casey Family Services and the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute joined the National Adoption Day Coalition, helping 34 cities across the country finalize 1,350 adoptions. By 2004, more than 3,400 children were adopted from foster care in 200 events in 37 states after courts and community organizations finalized the adoptions.

National Adoption Day is celebrated the Saturday before Thanksgiving Day. This year, November 18th is *National Adoption Day*. In Miami-Dade County, there are about 2,100 children in out-of-home care, 500 of which are available for adoption, and 61 that are waiting to be adopted immediately. Miami-Dade County will have a National Adoption Day Celebration Friday, November 17th at the Miami Children's Museum while Miami-Dade County Juvenile Court judges will preside over the finalization of approximately 45 adoptions that morning.

As of today, there are now over 1,200 National Adoption Day celebrations across the country. Among these celebrations, National Adoption Day/Month continues to spread the awareness of the children in foster care waiting for permanent, loving families, and helps the dreams of many children and families come true.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. STEVE GALLON III:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, endorse November as National Adoption Month.