

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 2, 2025

### New Report Warns of Deepening Crisis in Florida School Funding; Calls for Overhaul and Moratorium on Charter Expansion

**Coral Gables, FL** — A comprehensive new report released today, *Financing a High-Quality System of Free Public Schools for Florida's Children*, finds that Florida is failing to meet its constitutional obligation to provide students with a “uniform, efficient, safe, secure, and high quality system of free public schools” and outlines a detailed, evidence-based path toward restoring educational equity and adequacy across the state.

Authored by **Bruce D. Baker**, Professor at the **University of Miami**, the report analyzes more than 30 years of state and national education finance data and concludes that Florida's public schools have been squeezed by long-term state disinvestment, increasing reliance on local property taxes, eroding teacher wages, and rapid growth of publicly funded private and charter school programs.

#### Major Findings

The report identifies several urgent statewide trends:

- **Florida ranks near the bottom nationally in taxpayer effort and state support for K-12 education**, the result of a decades-long “race to the bottom” in school funding.
- **Real (labor-cost-adjusted) per-pupil spending is lower today than 30 years ago**—both statewide and in large districts such as Miami-Dade.
- **Teacher wages have become increasingly non-competitive**, and staffing ratios have fallen dramatically, increasing workload pressures and threatening instructional quality.
- **Achievement levels in Florida have declined**, especially in the post-COVID period, even as other states show signs of recovery.
- **The current state school funding formula fails to provide resources aligned with student need**, offering no support for schools serving concentrations of economic disadvantage.
- **Charter schools in Florida exacerbate inequities**, serving fewer low-income students, English learners, and students with disabilities than nearby district schools, while producing weaker academic outcomes.
- **Roughly \$3.8 billion in voucher spending—70% of which supports students who never attended public schools—yields far lower public return on investment** than if the funds were invested in high-poverty public schools.

#### Key Recommendations

The report issues a bold but achievable policy roadmap:

1. **Establish a statewide School Funding Commission** to define “high quality” education and calculate the true costs of achieving it, using rigorous, modern methodologies.

2. **Reform the state's school finance formula and significantly increase state aid**, enabling districts to meet the constitutional standard for educational opportunity.
3. **Impose an immediate moratorium on charter expansion**, including Schools of Hope, until equity and quality concerns are addressed through stronger regulation and accountability.
4. **Freeze expansion of the state's voucher program**, redirecting resources to support a fully funded system of public schools.

The report notes that Florida has the economic capacity to enact these reforms: if the state merely returned to its own 2000s-era funding effort, **public school funding would be 28% higher** than it is today.

### **A Call to Action**

“Florida’s schools and teachers are being asked to do more with less every year,” said author **Bruce D. Baker**. “The courts may refuse to enforce the state’s constitutional promise, but that does not relieve the legislature of its duty. The data show clearly that Florida can afford to meet its constitutional obligations—if it chooses to.”

### **About the Report**

*Financing a High-Quality System of Free Public Schools for Florida's Children* is the first in an annual series examining the financing, governance, and organization of publicly funded education in Florida. The report integrates national comparative data, newly developed Florida school-level longitudinal data, and the latest empirical research on school finance and outcomes.