

**The School District of Hernando County, Florida**

Office of the School Board and General Counsel

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*Jimmy Lodato*

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October 22, 2021

Mr. John Allocco, Chairman  
Board of County Commissioners  
15470 Flight Path Drive  
Brooksville, FL 34604

Dear Commissioner Allocco and BOCC Members:

Long lines to pick up and drop off kids creating twice-a-day traffic jams along with bus driver shortages are problems not only in Hernando County and Florida but also across the nation. Be assured that the Board, District, and Staff are doing and will continue doing everything possible under the circumstances and with the resources available to provide for the health, welfare, and safety of students, employees, and our community. Please see attachments for additional information.

As you should be aware, most of our schools are operating at or very close to their capacity. For years the School Board has been consistently pursuing all resources including the ½ Penny Sales Tax for Capital Improvements; the Millage Increase for teacher salaries, mental health and safety, technology, and academic programs; and Impact Fees to expand and improve school facilities to keep up with the growth of our community. Oversight Citizens Committees for all revenue and expenditures from the Sales Tax and Millage increase provide transparency to voters. Some of these growth solutions have been presented annually to the BOCC members who attended the Inter-Local meetings. The impact of this growth is taking its toll on our schools and community, as well as the County's roads and infrastructure.

Many of our schools are faced with the challenge of having students arriving and dismissing from schools initially built for less students on two-lane county roads that barely accommodate a school bus. The School Board will continue to explore creative solutions for addressing the growing student population in its schools, but the County must recognize that it has the legal responsibility to fund and provide for county roads, sidewalks, and our shared infrastructure.

Mr. John Allocco

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The School Board must follow very strict State rules for bus loops and hazardous walking conditions §1006.23, Fla. Stat. (2015) Example - Part 1 - . "It shall be considered a hazardous walking condition with respect to any road along which students must walk in order to walk to and from school if there is not an area at least 4 feet wide adjacent to the road, not including drainage ditches, sluiceways, swales, or channels, having a surface upon which students may walk without being required to walk on the road surface. In addition, whenever the road along which students must walk is uncurbed and has a posted speed limit of 50 miles per hour or greater, the area as described above for students to walk upon shall be set off the road by no less than 3 feet from the edge of the road."

If the County would focus more of its concerns on its legal responsibility to mitigate the impact of the growth and work collaboratively with the School Board to address the growth challenges including the long drop-off and pick-up lines at schools, we can make advances towards improvements for our schools and community. The Sheriff and Department of Transportation are trying to help and to work with the School District to alleviate some of the delays.

As you stated, changing behavior is not easy. We believe the best chance at addressing the impact of development and expansion, without thoughtful planning and intragovernmental coordination, would be to revisit a cooperative, collegial relationship between the School Board and County Commission.

Sincerely,

*Linda Prescott*

Linda Prescott, Chairman  
Hernando County School Board

Attachments