



*Florida House of Representatives
Chair Manny Diaz, Jr. and Vice Chair Bob Cortes
Representatives, District 103 and 30*

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DIAZ, CORTES WANT FLORIDA SCHOOLS READY FOR STUDENTS FROM PUERTO RICO
~Representatives Manny Diaz and Bob Cortes are joining other Florida legislators in requesting Florida Education Commissioner Pam Stewart to prepare for an influx of new students from Puerto Rico.~

Altamonte Springs, Fla. — Today, State Representatives Manny Diaz and Bob Cortes, along with other members of the Florida Legislature, sent a letter to Florida Commissioner of Education Pam Stewart that outlines a number of requests to help accommodate the large number of new Florida residents expected from Puerto Rico following the devastating hit the island took from Hurricanes Irma and Maria last month. Governor Rick Scott issued an executive order earlier today declaring a state of emergency in all 67 Florida counties in response to the catastrophe in Puerto Rico.

“It is extremely important for Florida to be prepared for a large number of evacuees from Puerto Rico,” said Cortes. “So many Puerto Rican families have literally lost everything, and we must stand ready to do everything possible to help their children transition as seamlessly as possible to a new school and learning environment.”

The legislators’ requests include waiving penalties for class size infractions and implementing a process that would guarantee that new students from Puerto Rico are counted in school funding formulas. They are also asking for a review of the temporary teacher certification process so that Florida schools have the opportunity to employ teachers from Puerto Rico who have been displaced.

“It is impossible to overstate the impact of these storms on Puerto Rico,” said Diaz. “Students and teachers are unable to access records, and it could be many months before schools there are able to reopen. We believe the actions we are requesting will allow Florida schools to be ready to embrace the students who will be coming here with their families to start over.”

The letter to Stewart is attached.

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