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Invest in educational excellence at Miami Dade College

As our nation and state continue to transition into knowledge-based economies where an education is the key to success, nothing is more important for students, young and old, than gaining the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate this new workforce environment. Our region's educational institutions have never been more crucial to the families and businesses in our county.

Miami Dade College (MDC) has been that indispensable open door to higher education in our community. Today, we need a vibrant, well-funded MDC more than ever. Every workforce study and CEO we encounter confirm that post-secondary education is now the essential passport to thriving in this new economy.

To that end, we have sponsored legislation currently before the Legislature that would allow Miami-Dade County residents to decide if they want to provide local support for MDC. The ultimate decision will rest where it belongs — in the hands of the residents. This would be democracy at work, allowing local decision-making on a matter of great importance to all of us.

Across our nation, MDC is held in the highest regard. The college has been at the forefront in linking college preparation with new careers and industry advances. As South Florida's economy has shifted, MDC has worked with industry leaders to create 70 new associate and bachelor's degree programs, as well as short-term certifications calibrated to workforce needs.

For many students, it is their only option for higher education, given the affordable tuition and the responsibilities that many bear to family and work. To the benefit of hundreds of thousands in our community, MDC has proven that open access and academic excellence can go hand-in-hand.

The majority of states in the country provide local funding to community colleges to supplement state funding. With this temporary local support, the college will address pressing needs for facility and capital upgrades. The bill would provide for transparency and accountability by creating an oversight board with representatives from the business and civic communities to ensure responsible spending.

We have the opportunity to guarantee that MDC maintains the excellence that has been its hallmark for more than 50 years and remains an open door to success. Join us in supporting this wise and needed investment in the future of our community.

Erik Fresen,

state representative, Miami

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