

# PRESS RELEASE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 27, 2020

## MEDIA CONTACT

bward@fc100.org, 813-597-3590

## Florida Council of 100 Assesses Impacts of School Closings in Florida

*~ 2/3 of parents say school closures impede work performance ~*

**TAMPA** – The Florida Council of 100 announced today its release of an [issue brief](#) assessing the impacts of school campus closures on students and businesses in the state. A recent survey commissioned by the Council found that almost two-thirds of employed parents of minor children in Florida said school closures and/or lack of childcare have either somewhat (41%) or greatly (23%) hurt their ability to fully perform their job responsibilities during the pandemic.

“In normal times, parents would go to work while their children attend school,” said Chris Corr, chair of the Council of 100. “Ultimately, getting parents back to the workplace means a societal commitment to mitigate future outbreaks through a comprehensive program of COVID-19 testing, contact tracing, isolation, and monitoring until a vaccine or effective therapeutics are developed.”

The Council estimates that the economic impact of a six-week closure of PreK-12 school campuses in Florida is approximately \$858.7 million. To put this in perspective, this output would have hypothetically generated only about two-tenths of 1% of Florida’s 2018-19 sales tax revenues – still a material amount but limited in the context of protecting 3.3 million students and their communities.

In light of this, the Council’s 12-page brief says Governor Ron DeSantis’s “prudent recommendation” to close school campuses for the rest of the year while maintaining remote learning is “justified by the relatively low estimated short-term economic impact of such closures as weighed against the potential long-term public health harms of opening school campuses too quickly.”

The brief also explains how school campus closures will inevitably exacerbate student academic achievement gaps in the short-term. Despite Florida being recognized as having the best virtual learning system in the nation, the quick, widespread ramp-up of distance learning equates to, as the American Enterprise Institute describes, “trying to build the plane as it is going down the runway.” Some loss of student learning time is unavoidable as large number of teachers learn to teach virtually for the first time while their students are unexpectedly plunged into educational environments necessitating new, unfamiliar learning strategies and technologies, as well as increased self-discipline.

Regardless of the timing of reopening school campuses in Florida, the Council’s issue brief recommends several actions to mitigate the ongoing negative academic impact of the closings, including the state:

- Further implementing innovative ways to support students and parents as they transition from learning in bricks-and-mortar settings to learning from home.
- Formally or informally evaluating each student’s learning status and need for remediation. Such assessments could be administered at the end of the current school year to identify at-risk students who might benefit from a summer bridge program and/or an early return to school in the fall.
- Using the summer months to provide teachers with professional development relating to distance learning and plan more consistent virtual education methods and technologies. This could potentially include continuing the increased implementation of formal Florida Virtual School programs, which students could join at the beginning of the fall semester.

The Council's recommendations for the business sector include:

- Ensuring that employers and employees have the necessary equipment and technologies available to support productive remote work environments.
- Using social interaction technology to facilitate communication and demonstrate continuity of activity.
- Developing new ways for employees to engage both formally and informally.
- Helping employees develop and adapt to new routines necessitated by remote working, especially in settings in which parents must help with their children's schooling.
- Emphasizing the flexibility of working from home. While work routines are important, those routines might vary from employee to employee, especially if a worker must also care for children affected by school campus closures.
- Maintaining the unity of the workforce when employees are split between those working in the office and those working from home.

A copy of the Council of 100 issue brief is available at <https://www.fc100.org/docs.ashx?id=620268>.

# # #

**About the Florida Council of 100**

Formed in 1961, the Florida Council of 100 is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization of business, civic, and academic leaders. It exists to improve the quality of life and economic well-being of all Floridians through the relentless pursuit of better, business-driven public policy. Visit [www.fc100.org](http://www.fc100.org) for more information.