

# MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

December 5, 2017



My fellow Miamians,

I am pleased to present to you the FY 2017-18 Adopted Budget and Multi-year Capital Plan. When I provided you with my budget address and submitted my Proposed Budget, I emphasized my ambition lead a truly resilient community – one prepared to withstand natural and fiscal challenges metropolitan areas around our country are facing today and will inevitably face in the future. Little did I know that we would face a major hurricane just weeks later.

I am very proud of the work Miami-Dade County did before, during and continues to do after Hurricane Irma impacted us on September 10, 2017. Before the storm, we cleared bulky waste piles, collected garbage, and secured facilities. We called for the evacuation of more than 660,000 residents, sheltered 31,092 evacuees, 970 pets, and 616 special needs evacuees in 43 evacuation centers and in area hospitals. After the storm, we cleared 574 miles of major roads and 399 square miles of Miami-Dade County. To date, we have collected more than 3.7 million cubic yards of debris and we are not finished. The combined cost of storm preparation, clean-up and recovery, and repair of damaged facilities and assets is estimated to exceed \$350 million. We are working closely with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the State of Florida, to ensure maximum and expedited reimbursement of these costs. We are also preparing should we be able to access recovery funds to address continuing issues our residents have experienced following the storm. With the support of the Board of County Commissioners, we set aside \$2.11 million of additional sales tax revenue generated as our residents prepared for the storm in a reserve to offset costs that are not reimbursed.

Even after Irma, we continue to provide services that our community values in a way that our residents and taxpayers can afford. The guiding principles I have used in the six years I have served as County Mayor have been transparency, efficiency, and fiscal responsibility. This budget, once again, demonstrates my commitment to you and to future generations of Miamians.

My goals remain the same. Miami-Dade County should be a safe community with accessible and affordable housing, cost-effective modes of transportation, expanding job opportunities, enjoyable recreational and cultural opportunities, and a strong infrastructure to support these efforts. We should protect our most vulnerable residents – especially children and the elderly – and provide the services they need to prosper. Our airports and seaports should be ready to attract tourists and business to our community. We must plan for the future and enforce rules that protect our environment, ensure the safety of our structures and reduce our vulnerabilities to the effects of sea-level rise and climate change.

We have, in fact, become more determined to lead not only our community but, as a member of the Rockefeller 100 Resilient Cities global network, help create a framework for the *world* to be able to protect our resources and develop plans to mitigate risks from natural and other shocks to our systems. It is not an exaggeration to say that everything we do as a government is part of our strategy to enhance Miami-Dade County’s position as a safe, strong, attractive, enjoyable, innovative, nurturing, exciting place to live and work.

The FY 2017-18 Adopted Budget was challenging to finalize. Unfortunately, due to legislative and policy actions at the federal and state levels, funding will be cut for local programs and services. The impacts of the Zika virus, the strong dollar, and other economic challenges have led to lower collections of tourist taxes, sales taxes, gas taxes and other revenues driven by spending in the community, which has limited available resources. Mosquito control costs, fully staffing the new Pet Adoption and Care Center, and the resulting impacts of the return of employee concessions will increase our spending. Higher medical and insurance costs also have to be funded. But because we have been so diligent in ensuring that our budget and financial forecasts have been conservative and eliminated the use of one-time revenue to support on-going operations, we were able to mitigate the impact of these challenges on our service delivery to a great extent and keep operating millage rates at the same levels as FY 2016-17.

In the coming year, we add 65 additional police officers and add two units in our Fire Rescue Department. Our Youth and Community Safety Initiative to provide services and opportunities to at-risk youth and their families has been successfully implemented and will be fully funded. More than \$225 million of funding for existing and new affordable housing projects is included in the Proposed Budget. My Employ Miami-Dade effort and the summer youth internship programs, along with the Mom and Pop grants to support small businesses are all funded at current levels. Planning and development studies for the SMART plan are fully funded. Miami International Airport and the Port of Miami combined expect to receive 7.19 million tons of cargo and greet 54.5 million passengers combined.

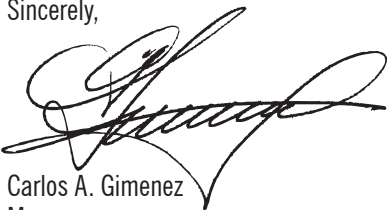
Libraries will be open more hours, have more funding for materials, and expand the afterschool tutoring programs. Parks programming and hours will remain at current levels, including the innovative and successful Fit2Lead and Fit2Play programs. Funding for community-based organizations and environmental grants will remain at current year levels.

In order to keep our core solid waste management services in place and expand our litter program, a \$25 increase in the residential household annual fee was approved. This is the first increase since in 11 years. And to ensure that all customers are paying the appropriate amount for our water and sewer infrastructure, an adjustment to the rate tiers was adopted; there will be no increase in water and sewer rates, though. Finally, because our residents should never pay more than is necessary for the service they receive, a two percent reduction to the Utility Service Fee, to six percent from eight percent was included. This fee, applied to all water and sewer bills countywide, will generate enough revenue to continue support for landfill mitigation projects performed by the Department of Solid Waste Management, as well as environmental remediation activities in the Regulatory and Economic Resources, Environmental Resources Management Division, along with remediation of soil contamination at nine parks in the county.

As staff prepared this Budget, I insisted they be mindful of the potential increase to the homestead exemption that will come before Florida voters in 2018. Likely to pass, this constitutional amendment will reduce funding for our four taxing jurisdictions by more than \$50 million each year. A reserve equivalent to the amount of funding that will be lost is fully funded this year in both the Library and Fire Rescue taxing districts and \$7 million is set aside as a first contribution to the reserve for the General Fund. I have directed that vacant positions remain frozen – with the exception of public safety positions and those that generate revenue – not only to save money now, but also to avoid layoffs later. I will not recommend an increase to the millage rates; therefore, adjustments will need to be made to budget within our means should the homestead exemption be increased. As reflected in our five-year financial forecast, due to the flagging economy and the projected increase in the homestead exemption, we are not balanced at the current service levels in the General Fund and the Fire Rescue District beginning in FY 2019-20 and will need to make service reductions or identify other ways to reduce costs. To be responsible stewards of the public's money, as well as the management of our government, those decisions will need to be made sooner rather than later.

I am proud of the FY 2017-18 Adopted Budget and my staff who worked diligently to put it together, throughout the County. They are dedicated, passionate public employees who care deeply about their government and their community. I thank them for all they have accomplished with limited resources. And I thank them for their extraordinary efforts as we weathered and recover from Hurricane Irma. My administration and I will continue working to ensure that Miami-Dade County remains on a path toward future financial sustainability and overall resiliency for all 2.7 million of us who call Miami-Dade County “home.”

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carlos A. Gimenez', written in a cursive style.

Carlos A. Gimenez  
Mayor