

# MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

July 15, 2018



To the Residents of Miami-Dade County:

In theory, the FY 2018-19 Proposed Budget should have been an easy budget to balance. Although Hurricane Irma and the spread of the Zika virus had an impact on our community last year, we have bounced back and bed tax revenues have increased by double digits. Our proprietary agencies are enjoying robust business: travelers are streaming through the airports and Port Miami; new construction and renovations are keeping the Permitting Inspection Center busy; hurricane debris cleanup occupied our Department of Solid Waste Management (DSWM) at the beginning of the year and generated unanticipated funding; revenues are increasing for most of our services. The efforts to prepare for the potential of an additional homestead exemption, which would reduce recurring revenues to our tax-supported budget by more than \$50 million, have been successful and our recurring expenditures are now at a base that will require no layoffs and no reduction to current service levels, should the referendum pass. As part of those efforts, this Proposed Budget adds funding to make a \$44 million Reserve in anticipation of the revenue reduction in the General Fund.

In reality, however, the FY 2018-19 Proposed Budget has not been easy to balance. And that is because when great tragedy strikes – a tragedy as unspeakable as the school shooting that happened to our neighbors to the north in Parkland on February 14 – we must respond. The FY 2018-19 Proposed Budget funds additional resources for youth and community safety.

The tragic events at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School will forever change our world. School shootings have happened before – Columbine High School out west, Sandy Hook Elementary up north – but never so close to home, to our children. Once the initial shock wore off, we learned that there were many warning signs, many weaknesses in our systems that, if known and mitigated, could have avoided such a tragedy. As I wrote in my Budget Address to you in the Spring, there is nothing more important than the safety of our children and no excuse for not providing the resources needed to do all we can to protect our schools and our communities.

In response to the Parkland tragedy, the Florida Legislature passed sweeping laws mandating new systems for identifying and disarming potential threats, the hardening of our public schools, and a requirement that a specially trained law enforcement officer be assigned to each and every public school. However, provisions for only about \$250 million statewide to address these mandates were included in the State budget, with a little under \$20 million allocated to Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS). That is simply not enough money to hire all of the new police officers needed for the schools in our community. Furthermore, we have a duty to protect all children – including those in charter or private schools.

In collaboration with MDCPS and the municipalities in our County, we will be making sure that our children are protected. Starting with the new school year in August, the Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD) will be providing resources to place an officer at more than 100 primary schools in the Unincorporated Municipal Service Area (UMSA) and staffing nine new specially trained Priority Response Teams (PRTs) to provide expedited responses to all schools and other areas where large groups of people congregate in the event of an active shooter or other emergency. These efforts will be supported utilizing our current staff working on overtime and funded initially by the Reserve created to offset the impacts of the increased homestead exemption.

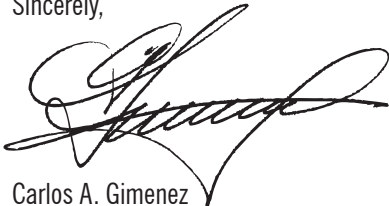
Even though this is the most expensive way to provide this vital service, we simply do not have enough time to hire the sheer number of law enforcement officers that would be necessary by the time schools starts. Within the MDPD budget, we are funding at least five basic law enforcement classes so that we can begin to replace the overtime effort with full-time staff. Also included in the MDPD budget are new positions to enhance our intelligence efforts related to social media and other information that could provide law enforcement with advanced warning of troubled children and to create a Threat Management Section (TMS) that can respond when an individual is identified by the

court as being in crisis. We – MDCPS and the municipalities included – are continuing to analyze the best ways to secure our schools, hire enough law enforcement officers, and keep our children safe. It will not be necessary to increase the property tax rate in order to support this service at this time. In the future, determinations regarding the entity responsible for providing this service and the ability to hire as many law enforcement officers as needed will govern the need for revenue increases.

In addition to allocating more resources to youth and community safety, our budget continues our other efforts to promote a resilient Miami-Dade County. Funding is dedicated to infrastructure improvements in our water and sewer system, our roads, our fire stations, and our airports and seaport. More than \$228 million in funding for affordable housing, including \$6.4 million in the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, is available to address the need for safe and affordable housing in Miami-Dade County. Funding is included to maintain our rights-of-way, our parks and our facilities, provide programming in our parks and libraries, feed and provide care for the elderly, enhanced enforcement in Animal Services, replace vehicles in the Department of Transportation and Public Works and other agencies, add new units of fire and rescue service, continue our child safety initiatives, and support everything else we do to ensure quality of life for all Miamians, while making Miami-Dade County attractive to people who want to live and do business here. We have set aside funds to enable negotiations to continue with our labor unions. And now we will be part of the effort to make sure our children are safe at school and our families are safe at the park, at the mall, and wherever we go to gather with our neighbors and friends. This year, we have accomplished all of this without an increase in the property tax rate.

From the beginning of my term in office, I have made it clear that my highest priority is ensuring our community is resilient and flourishes now and in the future. Despite the regular stresses we endure as a community and the shocks we have experienced in the past year, we are stronger now than we have ever been. I am proud to present the FY 2018-19 Proposed Budget to you, which continues my focus on transparency, efficiency, and fiscal responsibility. I look forward to discussing it with you at town hall meetings later in the summer and with the Board of County Commissioners.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carlos A. Gimenez', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Carlos A. Gimenez  
Mayor