

Amendment 5 Would Put Funding for Florida PreK-12 Education and Teacher Pay at Risk

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Providing a quality education to all of Florida's students is a core constitutional responsibility of state government and critical to economic growth. Adequate state funding for education provides the foundation for students to compete in an ever-changing economy, and it helps to attract highly qualified teachers and maintain the equity and fairness of Florida's education system.

On November 6, Florida voters will decide on Amendment 5, which would make generating resources to meet the needs of Florida's schools and students much harder. The measure would require a two-thirds (supermajority) vote of the state Legislature to approve any new state revenues, taxes and fees, or to eliminate tax incentives, loopholes and other such expenditures.

Florida currently has the wrong priorities, giving special tax breaks to big corporations while spending less on public education than 48 other states. Amendment 5 would lock in these failed priorities before the state has a chance to recover from deep cuts following the Great Recession and a supermajority requirement would likely require huge funding cuts in the wake of another fiscal crisis. Amendment 5 would unnecessarily restrict investments in Florida's future.

Funding for PreK-12 Education Remains Below Pre-Recession Levels

In the wake of the Great Recession, many states cut education funding dramatically after state and local revenues plummeted. While many states have rebounded, Florida's investment per-pupil remains 22.9 percent beneath pre-recession levels, after adjusting for inflation. State and local combined funds for Florida's primary and secondary (PreK-12) education dropped \$2,767 per pupil from 2008 to 2016, inflation adjusted.¹ By this measure, only Arizona is worse than Florida in terms of cuts per-pupil since 2008 (see Figure 1). The proposed supermajority threshold within Amendment 5 would lock into place deep state funding cuts for K-12, forcing local school districts to make cuts in teacher positions, programs or services, or ask local communities to increase their property taxes.

Potential funding restrictions are especially concerning since Florida already ranks low on many education funding and performance measures. Florida ranks 47th in attracting and retaining effective teachers, 44th in high school graduation rates, 42nd in spending per K-12 student, 49th in K-12 spending as a percentage of personal income and 42nd in per pupil spending for Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) (See Table 1).

TABLE 1. FLORIDA’S SUPPORT FOR PREK-12 EDUCATION IS INADEQUATE COMPARED TO OTHER STATES	
Measure	Florida Rank
Attracting and retaining effective teachers (2017)	47 th
High school graduation rates (2017)	43 th
Spending per student (adjusted for regional cost differences, 2017)	39 th
K-12 spending as a percent of personal income (2014)	49 th
Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) spending per student	42 nd
Source: “National Rankings for Florida Public Schools Mixed” and “Florida Ranks 47th in Attracting, Retaining Effective Teachers,” Florida Policy Institute, FPI analysis of data from the 2014 Annual Survey of School System Finances, Rutgers University National Institute for Early Education Research 20018 State of Preschool Report.	

Diminished State Education Funding Shifts Costs to Local Governments

As state funding has decreased, mandates on schools have increased. PreK-12 education accounts for 30 percent of Florida’s state budget.² State funding for PreK-12 increased for the upcoming school year (2018-19), but that increase has largely been earmarked for security and mental health services. While these are worthwhile goals, by restricting the usage of the funds and creating new mandates for additional security measures, the state has put school districts in a tough fiscal position.

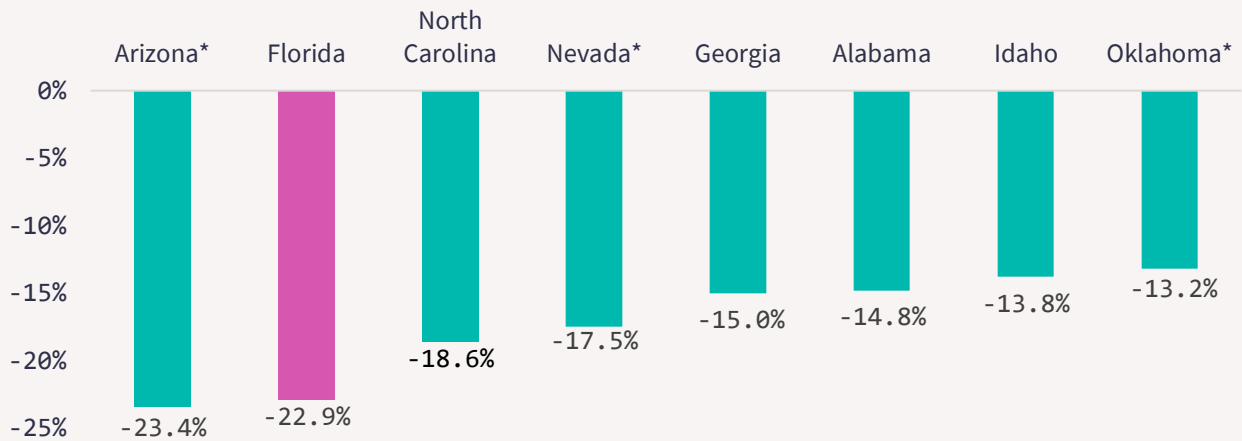
School districts have responded with program cuts and increased tax measures. Florida school boards are grappling with how to meet basic operating needs while also adhering to new state mandates. Districts facing severe budget constraints paired with new security and mental health mandates have proposed varying service cuts for the 2018-19 school year: reducing staffing levels, cutting gifted programs, reducing transportation options and allowing larger class sizes.³ Notably, at least four school districts — Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, and Martin — have moved to add local property tax measures to the fall ballot to address budget needs, which would generate an estimated \$510 million annually across the districts.⁴ If these ballot measures were to pass this fall, 25 percent of districts in Florida would have voter-approved additional property tax millage dedicated to local school operating expenses.

Local Property Tax Reliance Reduces Funding Equity and Impacts Rural Districts

The state’s K-12 formula funding is the central driver of funding equity for schools. The “Required Local Effort” school property tax required of all counties feeds into the state funding formula for K-12 schools. By redistributing some dollars from wealthier districts with higher property values to less well-off districts, the state achieves one of the most equitable funding education formulas in the nation.⁵

FIGURE 1. FLORIDA CUTS TO PER-PUPIL SPENDING SECOND HIGHEST SINCE GREAT RECESSION

Percent change in state and local funding, inflation adjusted, fiscal years 2008-2016



*States with supermajority requirements similar to Amendment 5

Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities analysis of Census Bureau's Public Elementary-Secondary Education 2016 Data and National Center on Education Statistics enrollment estimates.

By contrast, the supplementary funding from voter-approved property taxes stays wholly within the district's budget (See Box 1). Thus, as more local school districts feel compelled to ask voters to raise revenue in the face of state funding shortfalls, the funding for schools across the state will begin to diverge significantly depending on local property values.

Rural districts receive a higher proportion of their school funding from the state. While the state provides about half of all revenues for PreK-12 education in Florida, in some districts, that share reaches up to 80 percent or more. Almost three-quarters of districts receive over half their funding from the state.⁶ If Amendment 5's supermajority requirement were to become law, the resulting fiscal restraints may pressure state cuts to education, disproportionately affecting rural school districts in Florida.

BOX 1: IMPACT OF SARASOTA COUNTY'S VOTER-APPROVED PROPERTY TAX FUNDING

Sarasota County schools have benefited from the voter-approved extra property tax millage since 2002. Sarasota uses the funding for arts and supplemental programming as well as maintaining competitive staff salaries to support the district's A-rating. An average Sarasota County teacher made \$54,000 in 2016-17, over \$6,000 more than the state average, attracting applicants from neighboring counties.

Long Overdue Construction and Repair at Risk

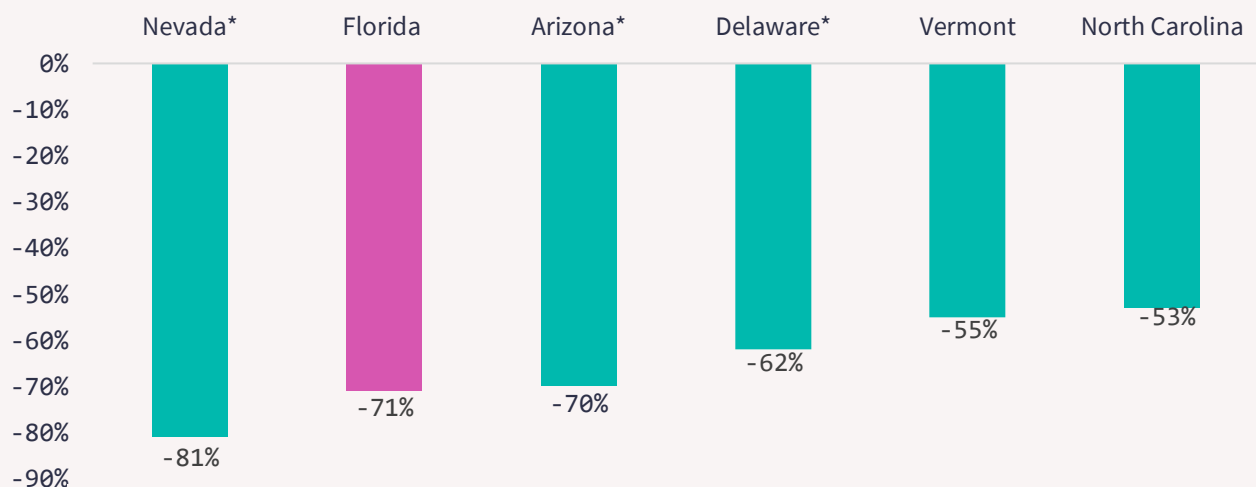
Funding for school capital expenses, like construction, repairs and technology improvements, have also not rebounded from the deep cuts after the recession. Florida's state and local investment in capital expenses remain 71 percent below 2008 levels, after accounting for inflation, which is the second largest cut in the nation (See Figure 2). The lack of funds has come at a cost—the Florida Chapter of the American Society for Civil Engineers gives the infrastructure of the state's schools a D+ for quality.

The SMART Schools Act of 1997 called for a 20-year capital outlay funding program using \$2 billion from lottery funds for school construction. However, funding under this program has lapsed and other funding sources for school construction have been reduced. Furthermore, only 42 percent of schools are designated hurricane shelters, meaning that the other 58 percent do not meet structural requirements.⁷ The average age for school buildings in the state is 30 years; 16 percent of schools were built over 50 years ago.⁸ Older school buildings have higher prevalence of unsafe construction materials; before 1986, federal law allowed for high amounts of lead in piping. Recent testing has revealed unsafe lead levels in school drinking water in older Florida school buildings.⁹

School districts are often forced to rely on portable classrooms for space, which are meant to be short-term solutions. The recommended lifecycle for modular classrooms is 20 years¹⁰ because of their susceptibility to mold, moisture, poor circulation and toxic dust.¹¹ The average age for the 13,867 portable classrooms in Florida is 24 years.¹²

FIGURE 2. FL CUTS TO CAPITAL SPENDING SECOND HIGHEST SINCE GREAT RECESSION

Percent change in state K-12 capital spending on school buildings, inflation adjusted, 2008-2016



*States with supermajority requirements similar to Amendment 5

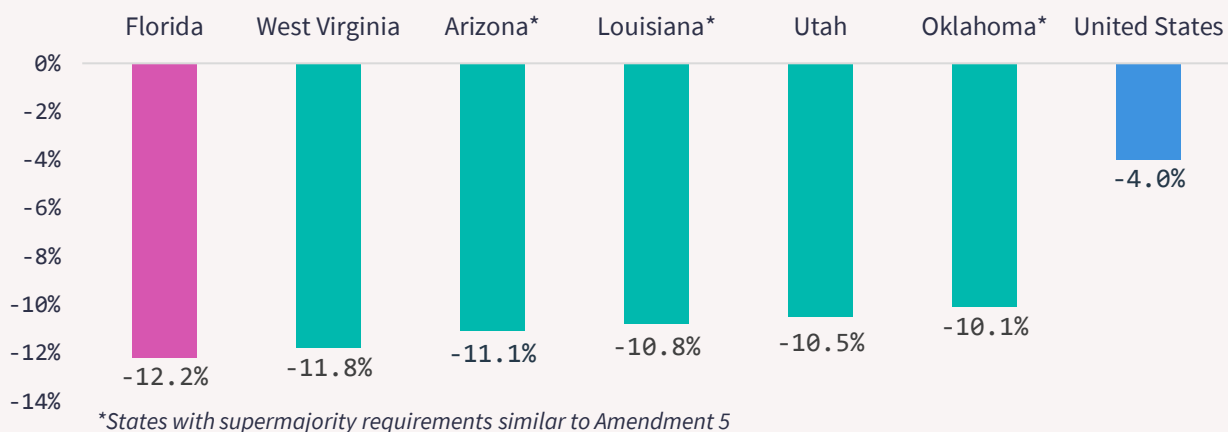
Source: Center on Budget and Policy Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau "Annual Survey of School System Finance" data, June 2018.

The lack of construction and repair dollars has undermined basic operations, leaving districts scrambling to ensure aging buildings are suitable for students. The breakdown of school air conditioners and mold incidence are prevalent issues across the state. Plant High School in South Tampa had to scramble to fix a broken air conditioner and combat 10 square feet of mold in time for returning students. The Hillsborough School District estimates that replacing the ailing units across the district will cost \$340 million.¹³ Meanwhile, on August 1 state economists revised the projected Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) funds available for school construction and repair downward for each of the next five years by an average of \$45 million.¹⁴

Without additional revenue for public school construction and repairs, students will continue to suffer conditions unsuitable for learning. A supermajority requirement like the one proposed in Amendment 5 would make returning to pre-recession levels of construction funding much harder, keeping many students in old, deteriorated buildings or portables past their expiration date.

FIGURE 3. FL CUTS TO AVERAGE TEACHER PAY HIGHEST SINCE GREAT RECESSION

Percent change in state average K-12 teacher pay, inflation adjusted, fiscal years 2009-2018



Source: "Ranking of the States 2017 and Estimates of School Statistics 2018," NEA Research, National Education Association, April 2018.

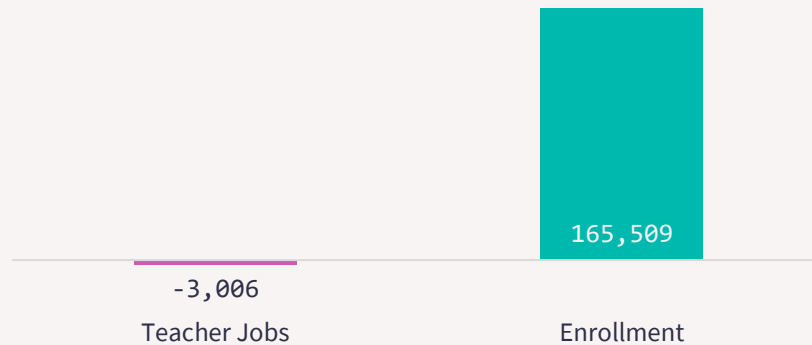
Supermajority Requirement Would Threaten Teacher Raises

Recruiting quality teachers is a key determinant of school performance, and research has shown that offering better pay will attract high quality teachers.¹⁵ Yet teacher pay in Florida ranks 45th in the nation.¹⁶ For the 2016-17 school year, the average pay for a Florida teacher was \$47,267 to 12,393 below the national average.¹⁷

The impact of the Great Recession on state and local coffers prevented meaningful raises for most teachers in Florida. Inflation adjusted teacher pay in Florida dropped more than any other state since 2009—a dramatic 12.2 percent (See Figure 3). This drop is more than West Virginia, Arizona and Oklahoma, where teachers and education voters pressured policymakers to reverse cuts and won some concessions on teacher pay in 2018.

FIGURE 4. FLORIDA K-12 TEACHER JOBS HAVE FALLEN AS ENROLLMENT HAS GROWN

Change in total K-12 teacher jobs and enrollment, Florida, fall 2007 to fall 2017



Source: FPI analysis of Florida Dept. of Education Data

Policymakers in Arizona, Louisiana and Oklahoma have the additional hurdle of supermajority requirements for raising revenue, like the proposal in Florida’s Amendment 5. These restrictions confounded efforts to address teacher pay and education funding crises in these states for a decade or more (See Appendix). Local school districts are scrambling to recruit and retain qualified teachers. Across Florida, average teacher pay varies significantly depending on local resources, from \$33,202 in Holmes County to \$56,799 in Broward County.¹⁸ Meanwhile, a decade of budget cuts reduced the number of classroom teachers, despite an increasing K-12 enrollment (See Figure 4). A supermajority requirement would exacerbate these emerging inequities by **cementing** local referendums as the go-to strategy for raising revenues, leaving behind some districts, teachers and students.

Conclusion

Adequate state funding for education is key to prepare students to compete in an ever-changing economy, provide competitive teacher salaries to attract highly qualified candidates and maintain the overall equity and fairness of Florida’s education system. Upon examining the experiences of other states with similar restrictions, such as Oklahoma and Arizona, a supermajority requirement like the one in Amendment 5 would unnecessarily restrict investments in Florida’s future.

¹Center on Budget and Policy Priorities analysis of Census Bureau's Public Elementary-Secondary Education 2016 Data and National Center on Education Statistics enrollment estimates.

² Florida Association of Counties. “2017-2018 Florida Legislature’s Proposed State Budget – General Overview.” Accessed via: <http://fl-counties.com/2017-2018-florida-legislatures-proposed-state-budget-general-overview>

³ Solocheck, Jeffrey. (2018, April 27). The Legislature raised funding by 47 cents per student. Here’s how Florida schools are coping. *Tampa Bay Times*. Accessed via: www.tampabay.com/news/education/k12/The-Legislature-raised-funding-by-47-cents-per-student-Here-s-how-Florida-schools-are-coping-167725494

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- ⁴ Travis, Scott. (2018, May 8). Broward School Board approves tax hike proposal for security, teacher pay. *Sun Sentinel*. Accessed via: <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/education/fl-sb-broward-school-board-tax-vote-20180507-story.html>
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- ⁶ Florida Department of Education. "Funding for Florida School Districts 2017-2018." Accessed via: <http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7507/urlt/Fefpdist.pdf>
- ⁷ ASCE 2016 infrastructure report card, accessed via: <https://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/state-item/florida/>
- ⁸ Florida Department of Education, Florida Inventory of School Houses (FISH), June 2017. Accessed via: <http://www.fldoe.org/finance/edual-facilities/fl-inventory-of-school-houses-fish.stml>
- ⁹ Johnson, Corey, Eli Murray and Marlene Sokol. (2018, August 9). The Hillsborough School District found lead in its water. It didn't tell parents for a year. *Tampa Bay Times*. Accessed via: <http://www.tampabay.com/projects/2018/investigations/school-lead/hillsborough-disclosure/>
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- ¹¹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Maintain Portable Classrooms, Part of Indoor Air Quality Design Tools for Schools." 2017. Accessed via: <https://www.epa.gov/iaq-schools/maintain-portable-classrooms-part-indoor-air-quality-design-tools-schools>
- ¹² Florida Dept. of Education, FISH, *Op. cit.*
- ¹³ Bradham, Bre. (2018, August 9). As school year opens, Plant High suffers double whammy—an AC failure and mold. *Tampa Bay Times*. Accessed via: https://www.tbo.com/news/education/As-school-year-opens-Plant-High-suffers-double-whammy-an-AC-failure-and-mold_170722352
- ¹⁴ Office of Economic and Demographic Research, "PECO Revenue Estimating Conference Executive Summary," August 2018. Accessed via: <http://edr.state.fl.us/content/conferences/peco/index.cfm>
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- ¹⁶ National Education Association: "Ranking of the States 2017 and Estimates of School Statistics 2018," NEA Research, National Education Association, April 2018.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸ 2015-16 School Year, Florida Department of Education. Accessed via: <http://www.fldoe.org/accountability/data-sys/edu-info-accountability-services/pk-12-public-school-data-pubs-reports/archive.stml>