

For immediate release

March 13, 2017

Contact

Anders Croy

Communications Director – House Democratic Office

(850) 488-9622

Anders.Croy@myfloridahouse.gov

Representative Ben Diamond Files Bills to Strengthen Early Learning and Elementary Education

Tallahassee, FL –Representative Ben Diamond (D-St. Petersburg) filed two bills this week to strengthen the state’s public education system.

In order to help children in Florida’s struggling elementary schools, Representative Diamond has filed [HB 1267](#). If enacted, the legislation would permanently fund an extra hour of intensive reading instruction for students at Florida’s 300 lowest-performing elementary schools, as determined by their previous year’s scores on the state reading assessment.

“Reading is the single most fundamental skill toward building a quality education,” stated **Representative Ben Diamond**. “By permanently funding an extra hour of reading instruction for these students, we are making an investment in children who may otherwise be left behind. This bill demonstrates our commitment to helping those elementary school students most in need of our assistance.”

Representative Diamond has also filed [HB 1359](#) to improve early learning in Florida. HB 1359 empowers Florida’s early learning coalition boards—the local entities charged with oversight of the School Readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten programs—by giving them greater local control. The bill would allow coalitions to appoint at-large board members from their communities. In addition, it would give coalitions the authority to determine provider eligibility to enter into a school readiness contract. HB 1359 also allows coalitions to determine service priorities for eligible populations in the School Readiness program.

“By allowing Early Learning Coalition Boards to make more decisions in their communities, we are strengthening our local education programs and empowering local leaders to act in our children’s best interests,” explained **Representative Diamond**. “Our early learning coalition

boards are best positioned to meet the unique needs of our communities. We need more support and more focus on early learning programs in Florida, and this legislation will increase local involvement in these critical programs.”

“I commend Representative Diamond for his leadership and his commitment to early learning,” said Lindsay Carson, Chief Executive Officer of the Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas County. “Local decision making will give Florida’s early learning coalitions the flexibility to better meet the needs of our communities and our children.”

###