

## Message from The Florida Chamber of Commerce:

Despite the efforts of certain anti-job organizations that protect the status quo for education in the state of Florida, Governor Rick Scott has submitted an application for the federal Race to the Top grant program. The Florida Chamber of Commerce remains committed to preparing Florida to compete in the global marketplace by ensuring a quality education is available to all of Florida's students.

Working with partners such as the Foundation for Florida's Future, The Florida Council of 100, Workforce Florida and other education reform advocates, the Florida Chamber is working to make sure that Florida leads the way for innovative education reforms needed to cultivate a talented workforce with the skills to succeed in the new economy.

Research shows the most important years in a child's development are ages birth through five years, which is why investments in early education are vital and provide a tremendous return on investment. By strengthening our state's early learning and Voluntary Pre-K programs, we can ensure our children are prepared to succeed in primary education and beyond.

Without a vibrant early education system, the growing need for a highly skilled and educated workforce will only continue to increase over the next two decades. This latest Race to the Top grant would instill valuable resources into Florida's existing early learning system. Specifically, this grant will help at-risk children by providing focused assistance to those that need it most.

"Florida's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge application is consistent with my vision for a world-class education system in the Sunshine State and meets our goal of ensuring that every Floridian has an equal opportunity to gain a quality education," said Governor Scott. "It is my sincere belief that focusing on these at-risk children will save the citizens of the state of Florida from the economic and social costs that come from long-term dependence on welfare programs that are funded with our tax dollars."

With this application, Governor Scott ensured Florida taxpayers will be protected from future liabilities and mandates from Washington and Florida businesses will not face additional burdensome regulations.

The Florida Chamber thanks Governor Scott for submitting this application for Race to the Top funds and will support his efforts to improve education in Florida. This legislative session, the Florida Chamber will continue to work with leaders such as Education Commissioner Gerard Robinson, Chancellor of Florida's State University System Frank Brogan and Workforce Florida CEO Chris Hart to push innovative education reforms at all levels from Voluntary Pre-K to higher education and lead efforts to enhance educational governance, focus on better outcomes and improve opportunities for lifelong learning.

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