

Pastors for Florida Children



BI-ANNUAL REPORT: JANUARY - JUNE 2021

NETWORKING

Since its inception, Pastors for Florida Children (PFFC) has networked with the statewide faith community to invite clergy and laity to participate more fully in the legislative process by advocating for the passing of bills that support teachers and students in the public education system and opposing legislation that is harmful to public schools and diverts funding away from an underfunded system of public education. During the 2021 Florida Legislative Session, PFFC networked with the leadership and members of the following nine denominations: 11th District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Church of God, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of FL, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Presbyterian Church (USA) South Atlantic Synod, and Progressive Baptist Missionary & Education Convention.

COMMUNICATIONS

The co-founders and participants of Pastors for Florida Children wrote or provided leadership/education in opposition to vouchers for the following media outlets:

- February 4, 2021, Florida Phoenix, "FL Legislature 2021: Lawmakers will face trying times over the state of education, with COVID omnipresent," Rev. Dr. Russell Meyer & Rev. Rachel Gunter Shapard's testimonies from the Senate Ed Committee quoted.
- February 17, 2021, Lakeland Ledger, "I'm a Baptist Minister, and the Educational Scholarship Program Threatens Truth and Education," by Rev. Dr. Ray Johnson.
- February 18, 2021, Herald-Tribune, "School Choice Leaves Poor Choices," Rev. Dr. Hope Lee.
- Thursday, February 24, 2021, "Faith Leader Press Conference on Five Critical Concerns," hosted by the FL Council of Churches, Angel Pittman spoke in opposition to vouchers, Educational Advocate for CBF and Communication Specialist for Pastors for Florida Children.
- March 8, SPLC Action Blog, "Florida school voucher proposal threatens to fatally undermine public schools," by Angel Pittman.
- Tuesday March 16, "Rally in Support of Public Schools to Protect Black & Brown Children and Children with Disabilities," Virtual Community Rally, Rev. Dr. Russell Meyer and Rev. Rachel Gunter Shapard spoke in opposition to vouchers.
- Wednesday, March 31, "Webinar: The Dismantling of Public Education and the Future of School," Hosted by Together for Hope Rural Development Coalition and moderated by Rev. Rachel Gunter Shapard.
- Thursday, April 8, "Sacrificing Complexity for Convenience – HB7045," Rev. James T. Golden quoted, Accountablonery Blog.
- May 14, 2021 "Vouchers for All: Buyer Beware," FEA Educating from the Heart Webinar, Angel Pittman, Educational Advocate for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and Communication Specialist for Pastors for FL Children.

Pastors for Florida Children also sent out legislative session action alerts via email and social media on the following dates: February 1, 8, & 15, March 3 & 15, and April 7 & 19.

EMPOWERMENT

Tuesday, February 9, AME Day “At” the Capitol, Advocacy Training for AMEs and all faith-focused partners, hosted by the Social Action Committee of the Florida AME Church.

Friday, February 12, League of Women Voters of Florida Lunch & Learn, “Senate Bill 48,” report and Q&A by Rev. Rachel Gunter Shapard.

Wednesday, March 17, Public Funds Public Schools Webinar, “Fighting Voucher Legislation in 2021: An Update on State Voucher Bills and Tools to Oppose Them,” Rev. Rachel Gunter Shapard represented Pastors for FL Children.

Tuesday, March 23, 2021, “Virtual Advocacy Day at the Capitol,” for Faith in Public Life, Rev. Rachel Gunter Shapard was a featured speaker on SB 48.

ADVOCACY

The co-founders and participants of PFFC gave testimony before the following committees for the 2021 legislative session: Senate Education Committee, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education, Senate Appropriations, & House Appropriations Committee.

Pastors for Florida Children was invited to add our organization’s name to the following sign on letters: Letter to Secretary Cardona regarding the federal Charter Schools Program grant to North Carolina; Letter to the U.S. Department of Education and State Governments Calling for the Cancellation of Standardized Testing During the Pandemic; Rep. Jamaal Bowman’s Letter to Interim Acting Secretary Ian Rosenblum Regarding Federal Testing Requirements.

Pastors for Florida Children is actively participating in the following coalitions and regional/national efforts:
Florida Coalition for the Success of Every Student
PASCO Coalition (People Against Surveillance of Children and Overpolicing)
Pastors for Children (National)
Network for Public Education Grassroots Network
Together for Hope Rural Development Coalition

Pastors for Florida Children sent representatives to the following DOE Listening Sessions on Civics Standards:
Tuesday, June 1 – Miami-Dade County meeting at Miami Jackson Senior High School
Wednesday, June 9 – Baker County Meeting at Macclenny Elementary School

Pastors for Florida Children provided support for Senate Bill 1108 which was signed by the Governor on June 21, 2021 and requires ballot education for all 11th and 12th grade public school students.

This Report is Presented by the Co-founders of Pastors for Florida Children:

REV. JAMES T. GOLDEN, ESQ.

Pastor - Mt. Zion AME Church in Port Tampa
Social Action Committee Chairperson - 11th Episcopal District AME
Secretary - Florida Council of Churches

REV. JOYCE LIEBERMAN

Executive/Stated Clerk Synod of South Atlantic, Presbyterian Church USA
Vice President - Florida Council of Churches

REV. RACHEL GUNTER SHAPARD

Regional Vice President, Together for Hope Black Belt
Board Secretary - Cultivate Abundance
Legislative/Advocacy Chair, Pine Forest Elementary PTA

