

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Senate bill hurts the working poor

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As chair of the Miami-Dade Delegation, I am committed to working with my colleagues to deliver resources that strengthen our community. We fight for what we believe will enable our hospitals, schools, colleges and universities, chambers of commerce, entrepreneurs, small and large businesses, and local governments to serve our community and be successful.

Sometimes in the rush of passing legislation, lawmakers unintentionally hurt specific populations by insisting on theoretical solutions to non-existent problems. One such misguidance is Senate Bill 540 and its companion House Bill 831.

As voiced by three South Florida college presidents recently, there will be an adverse impact on working poor and minority students if performance metrics for funding are placed on the colleges to require the students to complete their degree in two years.

I know firsthand the difficulties of balancing academic studies with the necessity of having to work and raise a family at the same time. Miami Dade College provided me with the guidance and flexibility to earn my degree.

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Students at community colleges are not the traditional 18-to-21-year olds who live on campus and whose only responsibility is to study. At Miami Dade College, at least 70 percent work full or part-time, and 90 percent are racial/ethnic minorities. At Palm Beach State College, 65 percent are racial/ethnic minorities, and at Broward College, 82 percent. Many are first time in college, with family and work responsibilities. There are more than 800,000 students attending community colleges statewide.

Why would we penalize colleges by withholding funding and mandating that they deliver 100 percent completion time of their students?

We must guard against a one-size-fits-all mentality and consider deeply well-meaning but misguided proposals.

STATE REP. KIONNE L. MCGHEE,

CUTLER BAY

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