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Chair, Committee on Postsecondary Education
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February 19, 2008

Florida Board of Education
325 Gaines Street, Suite 1514
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RE: Proposed Florida Science Standards

Dear Board Members:

We are encouraged by media reports which suggest that the Board is carefully considering public input before making a final decision on Florida's revised science standards. We understand that your consideration includes an amendment that would reclassify evolution as "scientific theory." This letter is intended to express our gratitude to the Board for their careful deliberation, and offer encouragement for new science standards that ensure our children receive the best possible instruction while respecting the beliefs of the broadest spectrum of Floridians possible.

One of the goals that the legislature has set for education is for our students to be globally competitive. Certainly, they must receive the information that is available to all other students. However, removing the word theory, as is currently used to teach evolution, is unnecessary. In an article published by the National Academy of Sciences, "It is impossible to prove with absolute certainty that a given explanation is complete and final... Many scientific ideas that once were accepted are now known to be inaccurate or to apply within a limited domain." Much has been gained through the study of evolution in the fields of health, agriculture, and even

industry. However, there are many questions that cannot be answered with absolute certainty. Science can describe natural phenomena, but it cannot answer the “ultimate” questions about our existence. Our concern is that without clarification, the proposed science standards might be interpreted as taking a position on these ultimate questions, questions that are outside the realm of science.


As you continue to refine the proposed standards, it is our hope that you continue to take steps to clarify these important issues. Our students deserve to be taught the most up-to-date facts of science. Equally important, they deserve to be taught the limits of science and the difference between scientific observations and philosophical conclusions. Evolution is a theory; thus it should be taught as a theory.


Let us be clear: our intent is not to request that science standards teach creationism or intelligent design. We merely ask that you continue to consider those Floridians who request that you not present a theory that refutes, without absolute proof, the very core of their beliefs.


The role you play in shaping the future of our state is critical. Thank you again for your commitment to Florida’s students and schools.

Respectfully submitted,


Marco Rubio
Speaker


Marti Coley
Chair, Committee on Postsecondary Education


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Speaker-designate


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Vice Chair, Committee on Economic Development


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