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**STATEMENT ON *THE NATION'S REPORT CARD:*
*2013 Mathematics and Reading—Trial Urban District Assessment***

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The Nation's Report Card has been an invaluable measure of achievement for more than four decades, giving the country the best independent analysis of student performance. The addition of the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA), which has tested students in some of our largest school districts for a decade now, has proved to be a much-needed tool that is vital in our changing educational landscape.

As a state lawmaker from Miami-Dade—which has been a proud TUDA district member since 2009—I immediately see the benefits of having National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data at the local level to measure against our local tests and get a more clear idea of where we really are and where we need to be. It is especially important to see trends, especially over the long term, for students in our urban, diverse school systems that often have unique challenges.

It is good to see that compared with 2003, for example, lower percentages of students in large cities are below the *Basic* achievement level in both mathematics and reading at grades 4 and 8. Over that decade, the percentages of students in large cities performing at or above the *Basic* and *Proficient* achievement levels were higher across both subjects and grades. In addition, from what we saw on state and national NAEP results released last month, Hispanic students have shown increases in grades 4 and 8 math and grade 8 reading nationwide since 2011.

For Miami-Dade, this TUDA report offered a bit of good news. The district's grade 4 reading average was higher than the large city average. However, it is notable that compared with the 2011 and 2009 TUDA assessments, we saw no statistically significant changes among both subjects and both grades. So while we didn't suffer declines, we remained stagnant. And I think seeing this should prompt us to look at what we can do to improve academic performance at these levels.

I am proud to be a resident and legislator for Florida, which since 1999 has been a leader in various areas of education reform. We really were ahead of the curve in using data to draw conclusions and then make relevant changes in our education system.

Algebra II is now a high school requirement. We have a statewide reading initiative for Florida's public schools, in concert with community groups and volunteer organizations, with the goal of having every child able to read at or above grade level and ensuring that each student receives a year's worth of knowledge each school year.

We have high expectations for our students in Florida. We continue to increase academic standards comprehensively, and there has been some harsh criticism when state test scores initially have gone down. However, our students continue to meet and exceed expectations and academic achievement continues to excel around our state. I think we are primed to meet the challenge. Our TUDA neighbor to the north—Hillsborough County—has demonstrated impressive performance in this 2013 report. The county is among the highest-performing districts in math and reading at both grade levels.

As you can see, Miami-Dade's grade 4 reading average is higher than the large city average and I see a direct link to our education efforts. Florida requires that students read at grade level by third grade. Yes, it is a high standard, but an achievable one. Looking at this positive grade 4 TUDA news for Miami-Dade confirms we are on our way.

And that's where I see TUDA as a resource: the truth-teller and a challenge to those of us down the line—policymakers, educators, parents, and the students themselves—who are involved in educating our students. We cannot be complacent. We need to see valuable data such as what TUDA offers and how that can inform the best decisions.

I think we in Miami-Dade can use these performance trends to push ourselves to improve. When we conduct TUDA again in 2015, I hope and expect to see statistically significant increases for Miami-Dade. As the education landscape changes, we will strive to change for the better.