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## State must spend more for education

Property taxes and soaring insurance premiums are forcing many long-time residents to leave. Outlandish public spending for parties, renovations and other nonessentials has made us cynical and frustrated with governments. It is time to let our collective voices be heard. One audience that serves as a ray of hope is the Taxation and Budget Reform Commission.

The TBRC was established by a Florida constitutional amendment. In February, it began its meetings for 2007-08 to give us an opportunity to share ideas and proposals on taxation, budgeting and governmental efficiency. Twenty-five voting members from around the state meet to hear testimony, deliberate and recommend legislation or constitutional amendments.

Two recommendations concern school-district funding:

- **First**, the state cannot continue to impose programs with which we must comply without giving us the money to do so. The class-size amendment is one of several costly examples. School districts have had to figure out how to lower class sizes or construct more classroom space without receiving sufficient state funding for the task.
- **Second**, even though education is a state function, local governments have increasingly been asked to fund schools. For several years, with the boom in home prices, the local cost may not have been sufficiently painful for us to complain. The percentage of state funds received dwindled, and county taxes swept in to cover the shortfalls. Now, with the real-estate decline, we can try to lower property taxes only if we insist that the state resume its responsibility for funding education.

I will ask the Miami-Dade School Board at the December meeting to adopt a resolution urging the TBRC to recommend to the state to stop unfunded mandates and to resume funding education.

These needed reforms will help relieve the excessive amounts that local governments are currently forced to provide for education, which is then passed on to property owners and consumers.

Visit the TBRC website, [FLATBRC.org](http://FLATBRC.org), for more information. I hope that Miami-Dade residents, Miami-Dade County commissioners and municipalities will demand greater accountability in providing tax relief to our community.

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