



**CHARLIE CRIST**  
GOVERNOR

March 29, 2007

Secretary Kurt S. Browning  
Secretary of State  
R.A. Gray Building  
500 South Bronough Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250

Dear Secretary Browning:

By the authority vested in me as Governor of the State of Florida, under the provisions of Article III, Section 8, of the Constitution of Florida, I do hereby transmit Committee Substitute for Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 1226, with my signature, enacted during the 39<sup>th</sup> Session of the Legislature of Florida, convened under the Constitution of 1968, during the Regular Session of 2007, and entitled:

An act relating to a merit award program for district school board employees...

Committee Substitute for Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 1226 creates the Merit Award Program for public school teachers. Specifically, this important legislation provides five to ten percent performance bonuses to our teachers. Teachers' eligibility for these bonuses is based both on student academic achievement and on a principal's evaluation of those teachers, thereby recognizing the important role principals play as the chief executive officers of their schools.

Teachers are the cornerstone to providing Florida's students with the best education in the nation. Florida must reward them for their hard work and commitment to our students. In addition, school districts search nationally for highly qualified teachers for our students. The performance bonuses created in this bill are a powerful tool for school districts to use to recruit the nation's best teachers to Florida and retain them here for a lifetime. At the same time, this legislation recognizes the important contributions that principals, librarians, reading and math coaches, guidance counselors, psychologists, and social workers make to school-wide student achievement by also rewarding them with performance bonuses.

Secretary Kurt S. Browning  
March 29, 2007  
Page Two

I applaud the Florida Legislature for making this important investment in our schools and in our children's future. I further encourage the Florida Legislature to fund the Merit Award Program to ensure that the top 25 percent of our teachers receive a 10 percent bonus.

For these reasons, I sign Committee Substitute for Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 1226 into law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charlie Crist", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Charlie Crist

CC/dmm