



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 14, 2021

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Florida Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran Speaks at Hillsdale College
Corcoran's speech, "Education is Freedom," takes its cue from abolitionist Frederick Douglass

Hillsdale, Mich. — On Monday, May 3, Florida Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran addressed an audience at Hillsdale College about the state of American education and what Florida is doing to offer as many children as possible a “world-class education” rooted in literacy. The talk, titled “Education is Freedom,” took its cue from abolitionist Frederick Douglass.

“Douglass said that education is the uplifting of the human soul to the glorious light of truth, and to deny any individual a world-class education is the greatest crime against humanity,” Corcoran said. He explained that education is about creating good citizens, not just getting a job—an idea that, unfortunately, is prevalent across political lines.

“It doesn’t matter what your degree is in,” Corcoran said, using the example of Steve Jobs, who ran the country’s first trillion-dollar company and is quoted as saying that it is the combination of technology and the liberal arts that yields Apple’s good results. “We want people who can think critically, who can problem solve, who can communicate, and who will be good spouses, good community leaders. The public must recognize the inherent value in education.”

In Florida, Corcoran and Governor Ron DeSantis are making strides to offer that world-class education across pay-grade and racial lines, especially among pre-K through third graders, whom Corcoran says are left hopeless when literacy is neglected, and that is a grave danger.

“Of the kids who can’t read in third grade, 86 percent of those cannot read in tenth grade,” he said. “The only thing that helps these students is accountability and school choice, and we’re going all in.”

Corcoran said that 61 percent of low-income children in Florida don’t have a single book in their homes, so he and Governor DeSantis have instilled reading-mentorship and book-of-the-month programs across the state. Florida has also adopted the [Science of Reading](#) method and is currently ranked fourth for numbers of readers in fourth grade.

Larry P. Arnn, Hillsdale College president, introduced Corcoran, lauding his work with DeSantis to reform the charter school laws in Florida, making the state a model example of how charter schools help American education.

“It is difficult to stand up against the constant bureaucratization of everything in the country to try to liberate people to do wonderful jobs for their budding schools and their own children,” Arnn said. “That is often, in the short term, a thankless task, and it takes a lot of skill and commitment. That’s what has happened in Florida. Corcoran is one of the most important men in the U.S. today.”

Find photos from the event [here](#). The full lecture can be found [here](#).

About Hillsdale College

Hillsdale College is an independent liberal arts college located in southern Michigan. Founded in 1844, the College has built a national reputation through its classical liberal arts core curriculum and its principled refusal to accept federal or state taxpayer subsidies, even indirectly in the form of student grants or loans. It also conducts an outreach effort promoting civil and religious liberty, including a free monthly speech digest, *Imprimis*, with a circulation of more than 5.6 million. For more information, visit hillsdale.edu.

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