

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2013 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 963

(Senator Mathias, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Ways and Means

Task Force to Study a Post-Labor Day Start Date for Maryland Public Schools

This bill establishes a Task Force to Study a Post-Labor Day Start Date for Maryland Public Schools. The task force must study the impact of moving the start date of the public school year to after Labor Day on the economy and summer tourism, as well as on the education system, including the academic calendar, planning, administration, and facilities use. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must provide staff for the task force. The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by June 30, 2014.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2013, and terminates June 30, 2014.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any expense reimbursements for task force members and staffing costs for MSDE are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Public schools must be open for at least 180 days and 1,080 school hours during a 10-month period. However, under certain conditions (a natural disaster, civil disaster, and severe weather conditions), the State Board of Education may permit schools only to be open for 1,080 school hours.

In case of emergency, the State Board of Education may open schools on holidays. The State has designated several days as public school holidays. They include the following:

- Thanksgiving Day and the day after;
- Christmas Eve through January 1;
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day;
- Presidents' Day;
- Good Friday and Easter Monday;
- Memorial Day; and
- primary and general election days for most counties.

Labor Day is a holiday for State employees and is 1 of 11 mandatory bank holidays.

Background: Labor Day, the first Monday in September, is, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, a tribute to the contributions workers have made to the strength, prosperity, and well-being of our country. Local school systems in Maryland are typically closed on Labor Day.

According to posted calendars for the 2012-2013 school year, all 24 local school systems opened school for at least some students before Labor Day. Seventeen school systems opened on August 27, or five school days before Labor Day. Of the remaining seven school systems, three (Cecil, St. Mary's, and Washington counties) opened school on August 22; three (Calvert, Dorchester, and Talbot counties) opened school on August 21; and Prince George's County opened school for student attendance on August 20 (10 school days prior to Labor Day). Several school systems begin the school year for kindergarten and/or prekindergarten a few days after the start date for other students. For the 2012-2013 school year, Prince George's County public schools are scheduled to close on June 7 and school systems statewide are scheduled to be closed for attendance by mid-June.

Per Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR), the fall sports season begins the sixth Saturday following the first full week in July (*i.e.*, before Labor Day). Participating schools may not participate in a regularly scheduled game until at least 20 calendar days have elapsed after and including the first day of practice. Golf is the only exception to this regulation. Fall sports include cross country, football, field hockey, golf, soccer, and volleyball. According to the rules set forth in COMAR, the first practice day for fall sports was August 11 in 2012 and will be set at August 17 for 2013.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 1502 (Delegate Healey, *et al.*) – Ways and Means.

Information Source(s): U.S. Department of Labor, Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 13, 2013

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Analysis by: Scott P. Gates

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510