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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401
ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY DELEGATION

Testimony in Support of SB0909 - Anne Arundel County – Public Schools – Innovative Scheduling Pilot Program

Mr. Chair, Madame Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

SB0909 would authorize the Board of Education of Anne Arundel County (Board) to establish a pilot program in one or more Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) schools using an innovative scheduling model, including an extended school year, year-round schooling, four-day school week, or any other model approved by the county board. The bill also authorizes any local board of education to explore the use of innovative school scheduling models, provided that the models do not allow for prolonged lapses in instructional time in public schools.

State law currently mandates that schools be open each year for a minimum of 180 days and a certain number of hours, 1,080 at the elementary and middle school levels, and 1,170 at the high school level. These requirements – and the need to meet both criteria – place constraints on school schedules that limit programmatic creativity and result in headaches for families.

This bill, requested by AACPS and the Board, seeks a change in this model and a move to a system that permits greater flexibility in school scheduling while not reducing instructional time for students. The dual requirement is arbitrary and outdated, and it unnecessarily restricts their ability to best meet the needs of their students, staff, and communities. Additionally, it runs contrary to the key component of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future: innovation.

The flexibility created by passage of this legislation would permit AACPS and the Board to pilot innovative scheduling models that have been proven to improve moral and achievement for students and staff. Such an alteration could also eliminate or greatly reduce something most families—including mine—dislike greatly about their school calendar: early dismissal days. Those days currently still count toward the 180-day requirement each year, but with calendar

flexibility we could explore ways to remove some or all from the calendar. The school calendar for the 2023-2024 school year includes 12 early dismissal days for students. This change in law would enable AACPS to provide students with eight full days of instruction rather than 12 partial days of instructions, which would undeniably benefit students. The structure could also lead to full days of professional development for staff, which would also be full days for families to spend with children.

AACPS and the Board look forward to engaging with students, parents, educators, and administrators about the best way to implement these flexibilities. It is worth noting that this bill would not require implementation of any specific innovative school scheduling model, including a four-day school week model. Further, this particular model would not be considered for elementary school schedules.

The Anne Arundel County Senate Delegation plans to meet in the coming week to vote on endorsing this bill. If it does, my office will send a letter of support to the committee. Per the Fiscal Note, SB0909 would not require any additional state or local resources. For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB0909.