



Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate,
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
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Board of Education
of Howard County

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SB0909: FAVORABLE

Anne Arundel County - Public Schools - Innovative Scheduling Pilot Program

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) lifts up **SB0909 Anne Arundel County - Public Schools - Innovative Scheduling Pilot Program** for our fellow school system given innovation is worth supporting at a time when schools are looking to change the delivery of education in Maryland to maximize student achievement.

SB0909 takes the intent of statewide bills introduced during the 2023 session (HB0510/SB0321) to allow for flexibility in school system calendars and shifts to a local pilot available to Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS). Specifically, authorizing AACPS to operate one or more schools within the county using an innovative scheduling model, including: extended school year; year-round school; 4-day school week; or any other innovative scheduling model approved by the county board. If utilizing a pilot program, they must meet the minimum hour requirements under Education Article §7-103(a)(1)(i) and operate for a period of no longer than 5 years, including a 1-year planning process and a 4-year operating period. In planning for a pilot program, the local board must: provide notice of the intent to operate an innovative scheduling pilot program to the Maryland State Board of Education and the impacted school employees, the school community, and the employee organization designated as the exclusive representative of the impacted school employees; and negotiate the relevant issues with the employee organization designated as the exclusive representative of the impacted school employees in accordance with § 6-406 of the Education Article.

While Education Article §7-103(e)(1) in current statute allows for school systems, including HCPSS, to operate on a year-round model, the 180-day minimum requirement would still apply. HB0881 only maintains the minimum hours schools must be open for student attendance for an authorized pilot program. Under Md. Code Regs. 13A.09.10.14 these hours are set at:

- (4) A school providing an elementary school or secondary school educational program, or both, shall be open for student attendance for a minimum of:
 - (a) 1,080 hours in a school year for elementary schools and nongraded educational programs; and
 - (b) 1,170 hours in a school year for secondary schools.

As a legislative priority when seeking flexibility in the way school systems account for instructional time, the Board supports measures such as the intent of SB0909. Allowing a district to count hours instead of days, for instance, would provide a true reflection of overall instructional time, as well as give schools the flexibility to determine how those hours are distributed. Under current law, whether schools open for the minimum three hours, or conduct a full six-hour school day, both count towards one day out of the 180 day requirement. Additionally, half-days are notoriously unproductive for both

instructional time and professional development. When counting hours, rather than setting up two half-days of three hours to count towards the 180 day requirement, school systems could provide the same amount of instruction in one full day (six hours) and now have the second full day for productive instruction or professional development. Maryland is already at the top of the nation-wide range in instructional hours as one of six states that sets a minimum at 1,080 hours regardless of level ([Education Commission of the States, Instructional Time Policies, 2018](#)). This same report notes 22 states either have no minimum day requirements (only hours) or give districts the option to meet either day or hour minimums. Only three other states have a minimum higher than 1,080 hours.

Especially given lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic regarding continuity of learning and lapses in instruction, SB0909 is a timely effort to allow a local school system to test the waters in being innovative and forward-thinking when it comes to maximizing instructional time to meet the educational needs of students.

For these reasons, we urge a FAVORABLE report of SB0909 from this Committee.