

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2019 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 591
Ways and Means

(Howard County Delegation)

Howard County Board of Education - School Year - Start and End Dates
Ho. Co. 25-19

This bill requires the Howard County Board of Education to set start and end dates each year for public schools in the county. The bill effectively repeals any law prohibiting Howard County Board of Education from beginning or ending its school year before or after a certain date. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2019.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Maryland State Department of Education finances are not affected. Requiring one local school board to determine the start and end date for its school calendar is not anticipated to impact the State economy.

Local Effect: The Howard County public school system can exercise this increased authority over the annual school year with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill negates the executive order restrictions on the Howard County Board of Education when setting the school calendar regarding how early the school year may begin and how late the school year may end. Accordingly, the bill exempts the Howard County Board of Education from references under Chapters 34 and 35 of 2018 to a county board of education extending the school year beyond June 15.

Current Law: Public schools must be open for at least 180 days and 1,080 school hours at elementary and middle schools and 1,170 hours at high schools during a 10-month period. However, a local board of education may apply to the State Board of Education for a waiver from these provisions of State law; the application must describe a demonstrated effort by the local board to comply with State law and that the school system calendar included from 3 to 10 days to be used to make up days lost. In response, the State Board of Education may permit:

- increases or decreases in the length of the school year (in addition to any adjustment made under the authority of local boards to extend the school year for up to 5 school days beyond June 15);
- exceptions from the 10-month period requirement;
- adjustments in the length of the school day; and
- schools to be open on holidays.

These adjustments may be granted only if normal school attendance is prevented because of natural disaster, civil disaster, or severe weather conditions. After any school system closure, the local school system must notify the State board, within 10 days of reopening, of its plan to make up the missed school days, including the dates of the make-up days.

On August 31, 2016, the Governor issued Executive Order 01.01.2016.09 (later amended by Executive Order 01.01.2016.13) requiring, with few exceptions, the local boards of education to open schools for student attendance no earlier than the Tuesday following the Labor Day holiday and to conclude the school year no later than June 15, beginning in the 2017-2018 school year. Under Chapters 34 and 35 of 2018, a local board of education is authorized to extend the school year for up to five school days beyond June 15 without approval from the State board.

Background: On April 24, 2018 – after Chapters 34 and 35 of 2018 were signed into law – the State board considered waiver requests from eight school systems with respect to school year day and hour minimum requirements for the 2017-2018 school year. Each of the requests cited school calendar issues related to severe weather-related school closures.

The State board approved requests from Kent and St. Mary’s counties for 1-day waivers from the 180-day school year requirement and a request from Baltimore County for a waiver of eight hours from the instructional requirement for high schools only, on the condition that high school hours in Baltimore County be increased in the school year calendar in all subsequent school years.

The State board denied requests from Caroline, Howard, Somerset, and Queen Anne's counties for two-day waivers and a request from Cecil County for a one-day waiver. The ability of school systems to extend the school year for up to five school days beyond June 15 was among the factors considered by the board when denying these requests. (On March 20, 2018, the State board also denied a request from Baltimore City Public Schools for a one-day waiver to the 180-day requirement.)

For two public school systems in the State, the last day of the 2018-2019 school year calendar falls after June 15; the last scheduled day is June 17 for Howard County and June 21 for Frederick County.

The State board approved waivers allowing pupil attendance prior to Labor Day for the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years for the public school systems in Allegany and Garrett counties and for specified schools in Baltimore City and St. Mary's County. Prince George's County Public Schools has scheduled orientation days for certain grades prior to Labor Day.

Local Expenditures: Howard County Public Schools (HCPS) advises that because the bill does not alter the 180-day school year requirement, its expenditures will not be significantly altered. Per HCPS, increased flexibility under the bill may help to avoid overtime pay associated with use of a school holiday to make up for weather-related closures. However, any such savings are expected to be infrequent and minimal.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Howard County Public Schools; Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 12, 2019
mag/rhh

Analysis by: Scott P. Gates

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