

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 19
Ways and Means

(Delegate Adams)

Education - Required Number of School Days or Hours

This bill requires a public school to be open for student attendance either 180 days *or* a minimum of 1,080 school hours during a 10-month period in each school year, unless school attendance is prevented because of natural disaster, civil disaster, or severe weather conditions. A conforming change is made for schools that operate on a year-round basis as authorized in certain counties. Education funding from the State or local sources may not be reduced if there are fewer than 180 school days or 1,080 school hours in any year because of an approved application to the State Board of Education for a decrease in the length of the school year. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2020.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: The bill affords each local board of education increased flexibility in determining its annual schedule and in adjusting that schedule in response to unanticipated circumstances. It is assumed that the length of the average school year will not be substantially altered. Thus, any annual cost savings are expected to be minimal.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Public schools must be open for at least 180 days *and* 1,080 school hours at elementary and middle schools or 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 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 five 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. Education funding from the State or local sources may not be reduced if there are fewer than 180 school days in any year because of an approved application to the State Board of Education for a decrease in the length of the school year.

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. Chapter 13 of 2019 requires each local board of education to set start and end dates each year for public schools in the county.

The local school boards for Baltimore City and Allegany, Anne Arundel, Calvert, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties may elect to operate one or more schools on a year-round basis if the 180-day *and* minimum hour requirements are met. Again, State and local education funding may not be reduced if there are fewer than 180 days in any year and a State board waiver was granted allowing for a decrease in the length of the school year.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: House Bill 1043 of 2019 received a hearing in the House Ways and Means Committee, but no further action was taken.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Baltimore City Public Schools; Arundel County Public Schools, Prince George's County Public Schools, St. Mary's County Public Schools, Wicomico County Public Schools; Maryland Association of Counties; Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Legislative Services

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