

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2023 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 321 (Senator Beidle)
Education, Energy, and the Environment

Public Schools - Length of School Year and Innovative School Scheduling Models
- Revisions

This bill repeals the requirements that public schools be open for pupil attendance for at least 180 days and for a 10-month period, and accordingly also repeals the process for local boards to apply for adjustments to these requirements, under certain conditions. A local board may explore the use of innovative school scheduling models, including extended year, year-round schooling, 4-day school week, or other models that do not allow for prolonged lapses in public school instructional time. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2023.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The Maryland State Department of Education can provide technical support to school systems exploring the use of various school scheduling models using existing resources.

Local Effect: None. It is assumed that local boards may, under the bill, both explore and implement allowable innovative school scheduling models beginning in FY 2024. However, the bill does not require a local board to do so.

Small Business Effect: Potential Meaningful. Small businesses that provide goods and services to school employees and students, and that employ public school students, including on a seasonal basis, may be affected.

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 waiver 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;
- 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.

The State board must explore the use of innovative school scheduling models, including extended year, year-round schooling, or other school scheduling models that do not allow for prolonged lapses in instructional time, in low-performing or at-risk public schools. The local boards of Baltimore City and Allegany, Anne Arundel, Calvert, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties, may operate one or more schools on a year-round basis, provided that the 180-day and the minimum hour requirements are met.

Local Fiscal Effect: It is assumed that local boards may, under the bill, both explore and implement allowable innovative school scheduling models beginning in fiscal 2024. However, the bill does not require a local board to do so. It is further assumed that local school systems will not adopt schedules that would substantially affect federal, State, or local school funding. For example, because State and local funding is based upon the count of student populations as of a certain time of year, it is assumed that local school systems will require attendance during those times.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: HB 510 (Delegate D. Jones, *et al.*) - Ways and Means.

Information Source(s): Baltimore City Public Schools; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Frederick County Public Schools; Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Legislative Services

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