

SENATE BILL 468

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5lr3254
CF 5lr2016

By: **Senator Benson**

Introduced and read first time: January 22, 2025

Assigned to: Education, Energy, and the Environment

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Public Middle, High, and Charter Schools – Start Time for Instruction**

3 FOR the purpose of requiring, beginning in a certain school year, each public middle school
4 and each public high school to begin instruction not earlier than certain times unless
5 granted a waiver by the State Board of Education under certain circumstances;
6 requiring each county board of education and each public charter school to
7 implement a certain public service campaign to raise awareness on sleep deprivation
8 and later school start times; and generally relating to the start time of instruction in
9 public middle, high, and charter schools.

10 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
11 Article – Education
12 Section 7–103
13 Annotated Code of Maryland
14 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2024 Supplement)

15 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
16 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

17 **Article – Education**

18 7–103.

19 (a) Except as provided in subsections (b), (e), [and] (f), **AND (G)** of this section,
20 each public school under the jurisdiction of a county board:

21 (1) (i) Shall be open for pupil attendance for at least 180 actual school
22 days and a minimum of 1,080 school hours during a 10–month period in each school year;
23 or

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 (ii) If normal school attendance is prevented because of conditions
2 described in subsection (b) of this section, shall be open for at least 1,080 hours during a
3 10-month period;

4 (2) Shall be open for pupil attendance a minimum of 3 hours during each
5 school day;

6 **(3) BEGINNING IN THE 2027–2028 SCHOOL YEAR:**

7 **(I) FOR A MIDDLE SCHOOL, SHALL BEGIN INSTRUCTION NOT**
8 **EARLIER THAN 8 A.M.; AND**

9 **(II) FOR A HIGH SCHOOL, SHALL BEGIN INSTRUCTION NOT**
10 **EARLIER THAN 8:30 A.M.; and**

11 **[(3)] (4)** May not be open on Saturdays, Sundays, or holidays in order to
12 meet the 180-day or 1,080-hour requirement of this subsection.

13 (b) (1) If a county board submits a written application to the State Board that
14 describes a demonstrated effort by the county board to comply with subsection (a) of this
15 section, the State Board may **[permit] ALLOW:**

16 (i) The following adjustments:

- 17 1. An increase in the length of the school year; or
- 18 2. A decrease in the length of the school year;

19 (ii) Exceptions from the requirement that the school year be
20 completed within a 10-month period;

21 (iii) Adjustments in the length of the school day; and

22 (iv) Schools to be open on holidays.

23 (2) **[These] THE** adjustments **UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS**
24 **SUBSECTION** may be granted only if normal school attendance is prevented because of:

25 (i) **[Natural] A NATURAL** disaster;

26 (ii) **[Civil] A CIVIL** disaster; or

27 (iii) Severe weather conditions.

1 (3) Education funding from State or local sources may not be reduced if
2 there are less than 180 school days in any year because of an approved application under
3 paragraph (1)(i)2 of this subsection.

4 (4) In case of emergency, the State Board may open schools on holidays.

5 (c) (1) The following days are public school holidays:

6 (i) Thanksgiving Day and the day after;

7 (ii) Christmas Eve [and from then] through January 1, **INCLUSIVE**;

8 (iii) Martin Luther King, Jr. Day;

9 (iv) Presidents' Day;

10 (v) The Friday before Easter [and from then] through the Monday
11 after Easter, **INCLUSIVE**;

12 (vi) Memorial Day; and

13 (vii) Primary and general election days.

14 (2) If the federal and State observances of a holiday are on different days,
15 the board of education of each county shall determine which date shall be the date of
16 observance for the public schools within the county.

17 (3) The public schools shall devote a part of at least one day to appropriate
18 exercises for each of the following:

19 (i) Washington's Birthday;

20 (ii) Lincoln's Birthday;

21 (iii) Veterans' Day;

22 (iv) Columbus Day;

23 (v) Arbor Day;

24 (vi) Black History Month, with an emphasis on Harriet Tubman and
25 Frederick Douglass and the contributions they made in the fight against slavery; and

26 (vii) Any other day of national significance.

1 (4) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this article, the public schools,
2 in the following counties, may remain open and in session on primary and general election
3 days:

- 4 (i) Calvert;
- 5 (ii) Caroline;
- 6 (iii) Dorchester;
- 7 (iv) Kent;
- 8 (v) Talbot; and
- 9 (vi) Worcester.

10 (d) Except as provided in subsection (e) of this section, the State Board shall
11 divide the school year into the terms it considers appropriate.

12 (e) (1) The county boards of Allegany, Anne Arundel, Calvert, Howard,
13 Montgomery, and Prince George's counties, and the Board of School Commissioners of
14 Baltimore City, may elect to operate one or more schools within the county or Baltimore
15 City on a year-round basis, provided that the 180-day and the minimum hour
16 requirements under this section are met.

17 (2) Nothing in this section precludes a county board from conducting a
18 year-round pilot study or program that is funded by the county board.

19 (f) Publicly funded half-day prekindergarten programs are not subject to the
20 requirements of subsection (a) of this section.

21 **(G) (1) ON REQUEST BY A COUNTY BOARD, THE STATE BOARD MAY**
22 **GRANT A WAIVER TO A MIDDLE SCHOOL OR HIGH SCHOOL TO BEGIN INSTRUCTION**
23 **AT A TIME EARLIER THAN THE TIME SPECIFIED UNDER SUBSECTION (A)(3) OF THIS**
24 **SECTION IF THE STATE BOARD DETERMINES THAT THERE IS A COMPELLING**
25 **REASON FOR A SCHOOL TO REQUIRE A DIFFERENT START TIME.**

26 **(2) A LACK OF FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR ALIGNING THE START OF**
27 **INSTRUCTION WITH THE TIMES SPECIFIED UNDER SUBSECTION (A)(3) OF THIS**
28 **SECTION IS NOT A COMPELLING REASON FOR GRANTING A WAIVER UNDER THIS**
29 **SUBSECTION.**

30 **[(g)] (H)** Notwithstanding any other law and subject only to this section, each
31 county board annually shall set the start and end dates of the school year for schools in the
32 county.

1 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

2 (a) Beginning in the 2026–2027 school year, and concluding before the start of the
3 following school year, each county board of education, including Baltimore City, and each
4 public charter school shall implement a public information campaign to raise awareness of:

5 (1) the health, safety, and academic impacts of sleep deprivation on middle
6 and high school students;

7 (2) the student benefits of a later school start time; and

8 (3) local strategies that will be used to implement the new start time.

9 (b) The public information campaign shall be targeted toward each school's
10 community, including parents, teachers, school administrators, coaches, and other
11 interested parties and shall provide an opportunity for feedback.

12 (c) The State Department of Education shall assist a county board of education
13 or a public charter school with implementation of the public information campaign if the
14 county board or public charter school requests assistance.

15 SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
16 1, 2025.