

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2026 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader**

Senate Bill 612 (Talbot County Senators)  
Education, Energy, and the Environment

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**Talbot County - Public Schools - School Schedule Options**

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This bill authorizes the Talbot County Board of Education to choose to operate all public schools in the county using a scheduling model that eliminates early dismissal days, to allow for less than 180 school days, if the minimal hours of attendance in a school year under State regulations as of July 1, 2025, are met. If the Talbot County board uses a scheduling model that results in schools being open for fewer than 180 days, the board must (1) offer hourly rate school employees an opportunity to make up the lost wages through other duties before the beginning of the next school year and (2) report by June 30, 2027, and 2028, to the State Board of Education (SBE) and the General Assembly on the operation of schools during the preceding school year that used an alternative schedule. The reports must summarize each day a school operating under an alternative scheduling model was open and the number of hours per day that the school was open with students in attendance. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026, and terminates June 30, 2028. The bill may not be interpreted to have any effect on the termination provision of Chapter 346 of 2025.**

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** State operations and finances are not materially affected.

**Local Effect:** No direct effect on Talbot County, as the bill is authorizing in nature. If Talbot County Public Schools chooses to operate schools using an alternative schedule during one or both of the two school years authorized by the bill (2026-2027 and 2027-2028), it can do so using existing resources.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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## 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 each school year.

However, a local board of education may apply to SBE 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, that the school system calendar included from 3 to 10 days to be used to make up days lost, and that the modified calendar makes use of these make-up days and extends the school year by 3 days beyond the previously scheduled closing date. 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 Maryland State Department of Education 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 SBE for a decrease in the length of the school year.

SBE 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 school 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.

Chapter 346 of 2025 includes provisions that are practically equivalent to the bill's provisions, but it applies only to Anne Arundel County. Effective for fiscal 2026 and fiscal 2027, Chapter 346 authorizes the Anne Arundel County Board of Education to choose to operate all public schools in the county using a scheduling model that eliminates early dismissal days, to allow for less than 180 school days, if the minimal hours of attendance in a school year under State regulations as of July 1, 2025, are met.

## **Additional Information**

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

**Designated Cross File:** HB 1006 (Talbot County Delegation) - Ways and Means.

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

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 3, 2026  
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