



Testimony offered on behalf of:  
THE GARRETT COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

---

IN SUPPORT OF:  
HB 743 – Universal School Act of 2020

Ways and Means Committee  
February 21, 2020

On behalf of the Garrett County Chamber of Commerce, representing 600 member organizations in Western Maryland, I write to express our opposition to **HB 743 – Universal School Start Act of 2020**.

Starting schools after Labor Day has had a positive impact on Maryland without negatively impacting our students. As evidenced by the numbers since the Executive Order was signed in August 2016, tourism increased generating more revenue for the local school districts and the State.

- Garrett County saw and 11% increase in accommodations tax collections, a 53% increase in heads on beds and an 8.3% increase in sales tax collections for August 2017 over August 2016.
- Garrett County saw a 24.2 % increase in accommodations tax collections for August 2018 over August 2017.

These increases are directly linked to starting schools after Labor Day and these additional tax dollars help fund our schools. Specifically in Maryland, the \$2.4 billion in tax revenue generated by visitor spending saves every Maryland Household \$1,100, and every 252 visits generates enough state and local tax revenue to fund a public school student for one year.

In Garrett County, accommodations tax revenues are already used to help fund Garrett County Public Schools. The Board of Education needs this funding from the tourism community but they argue that the Executive Order limits their autonomy. However, the Boards of Education still set their own school calendars. Limiting their funding would have far greater negative impacts than a minor adjustment to the school calendar.

Additionally, there is no evidence that starting school after Labor Day has hindered the education of students in Maryland. In fact, in Worcester County where school has been starting after Labor Day since before the Executive Order, statewide PARCC testing for the 2016-17 school year showed that Worcester County schools surpassed all other counties in five assessments. Also, a report produced by Virginia Commonwealth University regarding Virginia's post Labor Day school start concluded that there





is no correlation between starting the school year before Labor Day and student scores on the Standards of Learning tests.

The number of instructional days and hours stay the same so students receive the same amount of instructional time and same number of lunches. Starting after Labor merely shifts the school calendars from being open in August during the hottest days of the year to being open longer in June before the weather turns hot.

It's important to remember that the a statewide a statewide task force appointed by then Governor O'Malley, voted 11-4 in May of 2014 to support a post Labor Day start for Maryland public schools. And polls across the state have shown huge support for the Executive Order. A poll released by the Sarah T. Hughes Field Politics Center at Goucher College found that 72 percent of those asked said they supported moving the start of school until after Labor Day. An online poll conducted by the Cumberland Times News measured more than 80% support for this initiative. And a poll conducted by WJZ-TV found that 88% said yes, schools should start after Labor Day and only 12% said no. If the polls aren't enough, a petition was signed by 13,244 Marylanders to support starting schools after Labor Day. That is resounding support for the initiative.

The Chamber respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE committee report on HB 743.**

Sincerely,

*Nicole Christian, SON, CCE*

President & CEO

Garrett County Chamber of Commerce, Inc.

(301) 387-8745 office

(301) 616-0396 mobile

[www.visitdeepcreek.com](http://www.visitdeepcreek.com)

[nicole@garrettchamber.com](mailto:nicole@garrettchamber.com)



[nicole@garrettchamber.com](mailto:nicole@garrettchamber.com)