

February 15, 2020

TO: Ruth Toomey  
Executive Director  
Maryland Tourism Coalition  
626 C Admiral Drive #311,  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Universal Start School Act of 2020

Dear Legislative Representatives:

I am the parent of a Howard High School Sophomore living in Ellicott City, MD. I have been a resident of Howard County and Maryland for 20 years. Throughout my time in Maryland, I have been appreciative of the excellent education of my son has received in Howard County Schools throughout his entire academic career. I have found the schools to be both positive learning environments and ones that also support curiosity and personal development and have truly enjoyed watching my son grow.

An important part of his growth and development is time spent with family, traveling, learning, exploring and growing into the young man he is today and an even better man in the future. While involved in athletics outside of school has assisted in this, so too has time together with family and friends as well as traveling throughout the US to learn and gain new experiences. The ability, and time, to be able to do that is precious.

I am the Vice President of Sales and Marketing for a very large residential and hospitality company based locally. I have the ability to travel as needed and while my wife, also in hospitality, has slightly more restrictions, summer vacations and trips for family are ideal. Also, the ability to establish schedules, routines and set expectations is also critical. A significant challenge to travel, to time together as a family is absolutely having moving windows of start dates for school across the state. With family and friends starting throughout the summer, the ability to spend time together is compressed almost solely to the month of July.

Athletic start dates, holidays, etc. have an impact, however starting school prior to Labor Day does not appear to benefit the students or the districts at all. The ability to have a unified start date allows family, administrators, teachers and support personnel to have solid windows of planning and preparation for which all can benefit. Additionally, earlier start dates end up being difficult to manage for having three day weeks, four day weeks and then five day weeks when people with schedules much less flexible than my own or with younger children to navigate.

I fully support the Universal Start School Act of 2020 and hope that the State is able to secure start dates the day after Labor Day to help protect time together as families, allow for better planning for parents and provide for aligned expectations for students and families across the state. Thank you.

Jeff Brainard  
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