



**The Greater Ocean City, Maryland
Chamber of Commerce, Inc.**

**TESTIMONY OFFERED ON BEHALF OF
THE GREATER OCEAN CITY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

IN SUPPORT OF

**HB 743 Universal School Start Act of 2020
BEFORE THE
House Ways and Means Committee
February 21, 2020**

The Greater Ocean City Chamber of Commerce, representing more than 900 regional businesses and job creators, strongly supports **HB 743 Universal School Start Act of 2020**. This bill will essentially require, beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, a county board of education to set the start date of the school year for schools in the county not earlier than the first Tuesday after Labor Day; authorizing a county board to grant a school a certain waiver from a certain requirement for good cause as established by the State Board of Education in regulations; requiring the State Board to adopt certain regulations; etc. Statewide, we have seen such a positive impact from a later school start and hope to continue this Maryland tradition. It is not just about economics; it is about family time and truly enjoying a full summer during childhood!

Worcester County has already instituted the post Labor Day start over the past 5 years (2 years prior to the EO) with much success, boasting some of the highest test scores in the state. Specifically, 2016-17 PARCC assessments were the highest in the state in 5 assessment areas. As a parent of 2 children in the public-school system, we still receive 3 calendar choices within these parameters and get to vote on one option each year. This is also critical for tourism as well as our local workforce.

Since the Governor's Executive order, the state has received an influx of tourism dollars for up to 2 additional weeks, which can assist with a variety of state initiatives including education funding and summer enrichment programs (see economic impact report). Here in Ocean City, we saw the positive impact with 2018 Room tax up 6.6% and Tourism coded sales tax up 7.3%. However, last year, this law was essentially repealed, allowing local school boards to once again make the decision to start as early as the beginning of August.

Further and most importantly, this allows **Maryland families** additional time together. This is a statewide benefit to simply have all counties start after Labor Day, while allowing the flexibility of the calendar within that timeframe up to the local jurisdiction.

Eunice Q. Sorin Visitor & Conference Center

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This had been a multi-year effort that went through a rigorous vetting process.

In spring 2014, a legislative task force that was chaired by a representative of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and included teachers, administrators, parents of students in Maryland public schools, and small business owners, voted **overwhelmingly** to endorse a post-Labor Day start.

In 2016, a new group was formed to educate Marylanders about this important issue. **Marylanders for a Longer Summer** is supported by members of the business community, educators, political leaders and ordinary citizens who believe that starting school after Labor Day just makes sense. Members of this statewide coalition include but were not limited to:

- Maryland Farm Bureau
- The Maryland Hotel and Lodging Association (representing 225 members 24,000 rooms)
- Maryland Tourism Coalition
- Maryland Chamber of Commerce
- Restaurant Association of Maryland
- Maryland Association of Campgrounds (represents 25 Campgrounds)
- Maryland Building Industry Association
- Maryland State Fair
- Maryland Tourism Education Foundation
- The Garrett County Chamber of Commerce (representing 200 businesses)
- Smiley's in Garrett
- Pine Lodge Steakhouse
- McHenry Cove
- Brenda's Pizzeria/Trader's Coffee/Ace's Run
- Wisp Resort and Hotel
- The Greater Ocean City Chamber of Commerce (representing almost 900 businesses)
- Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay
- Ocean Downs Racetrack and Casino
- The Ocean City Hotel Motel Restaurant Association (representing 250 hotels and 175 Service members)
- Harrison Group Resort Hotels (10 Hotels, 7 Restaurants)
- Bayshore Development/Jolly Rogers/Thrashers Fries
- Carousel Group (7 hotels)
- Clarion Resort and Conference Center
- Princess Royale & Princess Bayside
- Francis Scott Key Family Resort
- Six Flags America
- Parkway Management Baltimore

- National Aquarium in Baltimore

And in August of 2016, the Governor signed the Executive Order.

Please note that starting school immediately after Labor Day does not change the current state mandate for 180 instructional days and retains local school board's authority to develop/approve all other elements of an annual school calendar provided the first day of instruction occurs after Labor Day. Finally, no empirical evidence has been presented that a post-Labor Day school start has had a negative impact on student test scores and performance.

The Greater Ocean City Chamber of Commerce Membership respectfully requests a Favorable Report for **HB 743 Universal School Start Act of 2020**. Please feel free to contact me with any questions regarding the position of the Greater Ocean City Chamber of Commerce at 410-213-0144 ext 102.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Melanie Pursel', rendered in a dotted or dashed line format.

Melanie A. Pursel, MS

President & CEO