



SB717 PUBLIC SCHOOLS – VIRTUAL EDUCATION DAYS – AUTHORIZATION

March 2, 2022

EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) supports with amendments **SB717 Public Schools – Virtual Education Days – Authorization**. This bill provides that a county board of education may authorize a county superintendent of schools, under certain circumstances, to provide virtual education days to students instead of closing the public schools in the county because of severe weather conditions. It requires a county board of education that authorizes a county superintendent to provide a virtual education day to adequately design the virtual education day model before implementation of the first virtual education day.

AACPS appreciates the bill's goal to explicitly state in law that the decision regarding the utilization of virtual days is, in fact, a local decision. It is important to note that a local school system is already authorized to provide for virtual education days to students. Section 7-103(a)(2) of the Education Article, a "school day" is counted toward the 180 day requirement if the school is "open for pupil attendance" for a minimum of 3 hours. "Open for pupil attendance" is not defined in the Education Article, but the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) does define when students can individually be counted for attendance purposes. Specifically, in accordance with COMAR 13A.08.01.01D, a student may be counted as attending school if the student is participating in school-sponsored activities during the school day and when that participation is approved by the local superintendent or principal or their respective designees. Despite current State law and regulations, the district understands, however, that there has been confusion regarding this issue.

It is also important to note that the language in the bill which would require a county board of education to adequately design the virtual education day model before implementation of the first virtual education day is confusing as this is not something county board of education would do or has the expertise to do. The development of such a model should come from the local superintendent and the superintendent's staff as they have the knowledge and expertise to develop such a model. AACPS recommends that on page 3, in line 1 "**A COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION**" be replaced with "**A LOCAL SUPERINTENDENT.**"

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** committee report on SB717.