

SB 717 Senator Bryan Simonaire_FAV.pdf

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BRYAN W. SIMONAIRE
Legislative District 31
Anne Arundel County

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MINORITY LEADER
—

Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee

Subcommittees

Chair, Alcohol

Health
—

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



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The Senate of Maryland
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Written Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 717

Chairman and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, I am here to introduce and voice my support for Senate Bill 717 – *Public Schools – Virtual Education Days – Authorization*.

Senate Bill 717 would allow a local board of education to authorize the local superintendent to provide virtual education days to students instead of closing during a severe weather event.

SB717 Virtual Days 3.2.22.pdf

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SB717 PUBLIC SCHOOLS – VIRTUAL EDUCATION DAYS – AUTHORIZATION

March 2, 2022

EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

Jeanette Ortiz, Esq., Legislative & Policy Counsel (410.703.5352)

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.

SB 717 - SWA - Public Schools – Virtual Education

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Position: FWA

5. An assurance that students will be able to make up assigned work missed during virtual days when they return to in-person school.

Research across the country has clearly shown that for the vast majority of students virtual learning is not an effective form of instruction. With that in mind, these guardrails are crucial to ensure that virtual education days during inclement weather days do not adversely affect the learning of the majority of students.

MSDE believes that consistency across all school systems on the requirements for virtual education days is crucial for accountability and equitable access to instruction for Maryland’s public school students.

We respectfully request that you consider this information as you deliberate **SB 717**. Please contact Ary Amerikaner, at 410-767-0090, or ary.amerikaner@maryland.gov, for any additional information.