GCCC Testimony SB 848 GCPS Virtual Learning 3-2-22 Uploaded by: Holly Lane

Position: FAV



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

FAVORABLE: SB 848 – Garrett County and Allegany County – Public Schools – Virtual Education Days Pilot Programs

Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee March 2, 2022

On behalf of the Garrett County Chamber of Commerce, representing 500 member organizations in Western Maryland, I write to express our support of <u>SB 848 – Garrett County and Allegany County –</u> <u>Public Schools – Virtual Education Days Pilot Programs.</u>

Garrett County experiences an average of 120 inches of snow fall per year which often results in a number of school days being canceled or snow days for the schools. SB 848 would allow for the Garrett County Public Schools (GCPS) to provide virtual education in lieu of snow days, thereby avoiding less interruption to learning and eliminating the need for make-up days.

The pandemic has proven that virtual learning is a viable option and this would provide a much-needed alternative to GCPS having to account for an unknown number of snow days and inclement weather.

The Chamber respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE REPORT on SB 848**.

Sincerely,

Kolly Lane

Holly Lane Project Coordinator Garrett County Chamber of Commerce, Inc. (301) 387-6171 office (301) 616-0396 mobile holly@garrettchamber.com www.visitdeepcreek.com



SB 848 - OPPOSE - Garrett County and Allegany Coun Uploaded by: Mohammed Choudhury

Position: UNF



State Superintendent of Schools

BILL:	Senate Bill 848	DATE:	March 2, 2022
SUBJECT:	Garrett County and Allegany County – Public Schools – Virtual Education Days Pilot Program	COMMITTEE:	Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
POSITION:	Oppose		
CONTACT:	Ary Amerikaner 410-767-0090 ary.amerikaner@maryland.gov		

EXPLANATION:

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) respectfully opposes **Senate Bill 848 - Garrett County and Allegany County – Public Schools – Virtual Education Days Pilot Program**, which would allow the local school superintendents of Garrett and Allegany counties to declare virtual education days in the event of inclement weather.

If done well, MSDE supports virtual education days for their ability to provide alternate educational options when severe weather conditions are likely to prevent normal attendance at the public school. However, it is critical that definitions and requirements be consistent across all of Maryland's local school systems and that those definitions and requirements preserve quality learning opportunities for all students. This bill creates different requirements for just two of the 24 school systems in the State, and does not include sufficient quality guardrails.

Further, local school systems already have the necessary flexibility to declare virtual education days in the event of inclement weather. MSDE has established a process with clear standards to ensure meaningful and equitable virtual instruction during inclement days. Local school systems must submit a Public School Virtual Inclement Weather Day Plan that includes:

- an assurance that students will be able to make up assigned work missed during virtual days when they return to in-person school;
- how students and staff will have access to devices and Wi-Fi;
- the continued implementation of IEPs during virtual instruction (including specially designed instruction, related services, supplementary aides and services, and accommodations);
- public presentation and discussion at a local school board meeting;
- the establishment of a communication plan to students, teachers, parents/guardians, etc., that the inclement weather day will or will not be virtual and the plan for instruction; and
- any other factors that are unique to their local school system.

Senate Bill 848 - Garrett County and Allegany County – Public Schools – Virtual Education Days Pilot Program Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs March 2, 2022

Sixteen local school systems (Allegany, <u>Anne Arundel</u>, <u>Baltimore County</u>, <u>Carroll</u>, Cecil, Dorchester, <u>Garrett, Kent</u>, <u>Montgomery</u>, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, <u>Somerset</u>, <u>Talbot</u>, Washington, <u>Wicomico</u>, and <u>Worcester</u>) submitted plans to MSDE. This statewide approach will protect high quality learning opportunities for students.

Research from across the country has made it clear that for the vast majority of students virtual learning is not an effective form of instruction. Ensuring that consistent and comprehensive guardrails are in place for virtual education days is crucial to ensure the virtual days during inclement weather does not adversely affect the learning of the majority of students.

We respectfully request that you consider this information as you deliberate **Senate Bill 848.** Please contact Ary Amerikaner, at 410-767-0090, or <u>ary.amerikaner@maryland.gov</u>, for any additional information.

SB848 ACEA Testimony.pdf Uploaded by: Samantha Zwerling Position: UNF



Testimony Submitted on Behalf of the Allegany County Education Association

On

Garrett County and Allegany County – Public Schools – Virtual Education Days Pilot Program

Senate Bill 848

Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs

March 2, 2022

The Allegany County Education Association (ACEA) views Senate Bill 848 unfavorably. Though ACEA leadership understands the intent of this bill, it is problematic on multiple levels. It would not be advantageous for educators or students. While the amendments make this bill a pilot program, ACEA still opposes the bill for the reasons outlined below.

Allegany County Education Association is a member driven organization of education employees from a wide variety of career classifications. We are the teachers, instructional assistants, secretaries, and Technicians, that make Allegany County Public Schools function for our students and communities on a day to day basis. ACEA is an affiliate of the Maryland State Education Association and the National Education Association.

ACEA urges an unfavorable report on SB 848. First, as the pandemic has demonstrated, there is no substitute for the in-person expertise of our members. To the greatest extent possible, students must have the benefit of that expertise and the replacement of it with virtual instruction must be reserved for the most serious of circumstances. Periodic inclement weather does not meet that standard. In addition, Allegany County still has areas with limited internet access, as well as the willingness of some to acquiesce to this form of instruction.

Further, ACEA is concerned about the potential impacts of this kind of policy to Education Support Professionals. This kind of policy could have financial ramifications for these members of the school community, which include food and nutrition staff, and bus drivers in addition to those we represent. If a school is closed for a virtual education day, these professionals could lose compensation for that day. These are often the lowest paid employees in the system, and are less likely to make up for a lost day's pay.

Finally, ACEA does not think this bill is necessary. Other systems are doing this, or thinking about doing this without state legislation¹.

ACEA appreciates your consideration of this testimony and urges an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 848.

¹<u>https://news.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/quicknotes/mcps-to-consider-virtual-learning-on-bad-weather-days-2/</u> (Accessed March 2, 2022)