

SB 321_ Public Schools - Length of School Year and

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Position: FAV



PSSAM
Public School Superintendents' Association
OF MARYLAND

Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director
1217 S. Potomac Street
Baltimore, MD 21224
410-935-7281
marypat.fannon@pssam.org

BILL: SB 321

TITLE: Public Schools - Length of School Year and Innovative School Scheduling Models - Revisions

DATE: February 22, 2023

POSITION: Support

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four local school superintendents, **supports** Senate Bill 321.

Senate Bill 321 alters current law requiring a certain length of school year for student attendance. Additionally, this bill would authorize county boards of education to explore the use of innovative school scheduling models, including an extended year, year-round schooling, a 4-day school week, and other models. However, the bill creates guardrails by ensuring there are no prolonged lapses in instructional time.

Current State law requires that public schools be in session for both 180 days **and** a minimum number of seat hours (1,080 at the elementary and middle school levels, and 1,170 at the high school level). This legislation will allow school systems to meet the minimum number of seat hours required, but removes existing constraints that require these hours be met during a ten-month period over the course of a school year of at least 180 days. To be clear, such a change would *not* mandate that any school system alter current operations in any way. Under this legislation, local school systems will still be required to meet the existing minimum number of seat hours for all students.

The delivery of public education must evolve. If the COVID-19 pandemic taught us one lesson, it is that the traditional model of educating students is not the only way to educate students. We learned that some students can learn and excel in much more creative models and these models deserve more research and consideration.

Maryland's superintendents unanimously agree that implementing flexible scheduling models at the discretion of local systems provides additional creative options that allow for the delivery of a free and appropriate public education that best meets the needs of all Maryland students. Therefore, PSSAM strongly supports this innovative piece of legislation to recognize and explore these new, more flexible models.

For these reasons, PSSAM **supports** Senate Bill 321 and urges a favorable report.

FINAL - SB321 - Length of School Year and Innovati

Uploaded by: Grace Wilson

Position: FAV



**SB321 PUBLIC SCHOOLS – LENGTH OF SCHOOL YEAR AND INNOVATIVE SCHOOL SCHEDULING
MODELS - REVISIONS**

February 22, 2023

EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

SUPPORT

Grace Wilson, Legislative & Policy Specialist (410.440.1758)

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) strongly supports **HB510 Public Schools – Length of School Year and Innovative School Scheduling Models – Revisions**. Current State law requires public schools to be in session for **both** 180 days **and** a minimum number of seat hours (1,080 at the elementary and middle school levels, and 1,170 at the high school level) in a given school year. This bill alters the length of school year requirement for student attendance to require a minimum of 1,080 hours of student attendance each school year. Additionally, this bill authorizes county boards of education to explore the use of innovative school scheduling models, including an extended year, year-round schooling, a four-day school week, or other school scheduling models that do not allow for prolonged lapses in instruction time in public schools.

As the Maryland State Department of Education and local school systems across the State seek innovative approaches to educating students through the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future (Blueprint), this rigid and outdated artificial constraint on school year scheduling remains, preventing school systems from exploring innovative instructional programs and school operations that best meet the needs of our students. The Blueprint is all about innovation, and so is this bill. However, it is important to note that this bill **does not force any school system to do anything different than it does now**.

This bill does allow for flexibility to do things like eliminate early dismissals that are a source of nearly universal consternation among students, families, and staff. It also allows flexibility to add minutes to the school day and actually shorten the school year – creating a longer summer.

This change will provide local school systems with more flexibility to tailor instructional programs and school operations to innovatively best meet the needs of their students, while not diminishing in any way requirements regarding the amount of instruction provided to those students. The flexibility we seek is crucial as we explore the use of new and innovative school scheduling models to continue to combat learning loss caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and to invigorate education in Maryland.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** committee report on SB321.

SB 321.School Calendar Flexibility Based on Hours.

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: FAV

BILL: Senate Bill 321
TITLE: Public Schools - Length of School Year and Innovative School Scheduling Models - Revisions
DATE: February 22, 2023
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the state's local boards of education, supports Senate Bill 321 because it would provide much needed flexibility for local school systems to adopt annual school calendars determined to be in the best interests of student learning.

MABE always places a high priority on advocating for continued governance autonomy for local boards of education to set education policy and school budgets which provide educational benefits for all students; and opposition to unfunded mandates. Local boards support the enhanced local school calendar flexibility that Senate Bill 321 would provide to allow each of Maryland's 24 local school systems to consider options beyond the 180-day strictures of the current law.

On August 31, 2016 Governor Hogan signed an Executive Order mandating a post-Labor Day start for all of Maryland's public schools beginning in 2017. The Order further mandated that that school year end by June 15th. MABE objected to this initiative as contrary to the principle of local governance, and the traditional role of boards of education and their communities in setting school calendars. The State Board of Education responded to the first Executive Order by indicating its willingness to favorably consider waiver requests.

Then, on October 11, 2016, Governor Hogan issued a second, amended Executive Order to forestall the intention of the State Board of Education to consider and grant waivers from the post-Labor Day through June 15 school year based on a local board of education's showing that commencing their academic calendar before Labor Day would provide educational benefit to students. The second Executive Order repealed the previous waiver language and insisted that the State Board follow formal regulatory procedures in adopting waiver criteria. In addition, the Order requires that local boards establish a "compelling justification" for any requested waiver by satisfying all elements stipulated in the Order.

Fortunately, the legislature acted to alleviate these barriers to local decision making on school calendars by authorizing a local board of education to adopt their own start and end dates to the school year. Senate Bill 321 would further expand the options available to local boards by allowing them to consider innovative scheduling strategies. Such strategies may be designed not only to meet minimum educational requirements but also to facilitate efforts to avoid long gaps in instruction and to align with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future expansions of career and technical education and dual enrollment programs. In these ways, this bill would greatly assist local boards in determining whether and how to adjust their respective local school calendars.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 321.

Support from MSDE

Uploaded by: Justin Dayhoff

Position: FAV



Mohammed Choudhury
State Superintendent of Schools

BILL:	Senate Bill (SB) 321	DATE:	February 22, 2023
SUBJECT:	Public Schools - Length of School Year and Innovative School Scheduling Models - Revisions	COMMITTEE:	Education, Energy, and the Environment
POSITION:	Support		
CONTACT:	Justin Dayhoff 410-767-0439 justin.dayhoff@maryland.gov		

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) supports with amendments Senate Bill (SB) 321 – *Public Schools - Length of School Year and Innovative School Scheduling Models - Revisions*. The bill as drafted encourages local education agencies (LEAs) to explore innovative school scheduling models but removes the Maryland State Department of Education’s (MSDE’s) ability to review and permit LEAs to adopt plans that impact the length of the school year. Removing Department approval of LEA plans without placing new requirements means that the bill, as drafted, does not have safeguards in place to ensure Departmental review.

As a result – and as indicated above – if all local education agencies utilize the flexibility afforded in this legislation, disruptions in services, support, and assessment calendars may create significant operational impacts at the Department and may impact Department operational requirements associated with State and federal reporting timelines and Blueprint/grant program implementation.

MSDE supports and encourages spurring innovation. However, certain models have deleterious effects on student outcomes, particularly the allowance of four-day school weeks or the proliferation of asynchronous instruction days that count as full instructional days.

As evidenced most recently in Colorado, these models are shown to negatively impact student outcomes and create challenges associated with workforce recruitment and retention. MSDE recommends including safeguards to protect against or give MSDE the ability to protect against models that have been shown to negatively impact schools and students.

MSDE otherwise supports the bill but with amendments to restore language requiring MSDE review and approval of programs so that MSDE can ensure continuity of required programs and services. MSDE respectfully requests that you consider this letter of support with amendments as you deliberate Senate Bill 321. Please contact Justin Dayhoff, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Financial Planning, Operations, and Strategy by phone at 410-767-0439.

SB0321 MJM 022223 Testimony - Length of School Yea

Uploaded by: Superintendent Howard County

Position: FAV



Dr. Michael J. Martirano
Superintendent, Howard County Public School System

**Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate,
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 22, 2023**

SB0321: SUPPORT

Public Schools - Length of School Year and Innovative School Scheduling Models – Revisions

As the Superintendent of the Howard County Public School System, each and every decision I make centers on the educational well-being of over 57,000 students attending our schools. Each year as we put together the puzzle of setting out the school system calendar, the over-arching factor in decision making must always be our responsibility as teachers and administrators to deliver sustained, quality education that delivers an educational experience that results in every student achieving. Equitable opportunity for academic growth over the course of a year in each grade level needs to take priority over counting days in seats.

In the not so distant past, mandated book-ends on our calendar between Labor Day and June 15th caused consternation and frustration from local boards of education all the way down to administrators and teachers. It took away from our ability to build in ample time during the school year for professional development to strengthen instructional skills and collaborate with coworkers on student and school-wide goals. Professional days scheduled prior to students returning to school do not allow staff to meet the evolving instructional needs of students as the year progresses, nor do the traditionally used half days always allow for desired productivity. The limited timeframe also created a longer summer break, adding to the time needed to reacclimatize students to the classroom and refresh what they learned from the previous year.

This legislative body, however, took action to remove the restraints of the then Governor’s executive order and allow school systems to meet the statutorily defined 180 days of instruction within a 10-month period of their choosing. SB0321 is before you today to continue to move the needle forward in giving school systems the flexibility to truly maximize instructional time by meeting the bill’s stated intent to “explore the use of innovative school scheduling models, including extended year, year-round schooling, 4-day school week, or other school scheduling models that do not allow for prolonged lapses in instruction time in public schools.”

Our school system calendar is developed collaboratively with the input of educators, parents, and other school system stakeholders through public participation on a calendar committee and Board of Education of Howard County hearings. That would continue to be the case should SB0321 pass, and any new models are considered.

In a county where poverty levels have nearly doubled over the last 10 years, required special education services continue to rise, and overcoming the learning loss and mental health challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic remains a priority, the Howard County Public School System has made a concerted effort to ensure schools are a hub for the resources needed to remove barriers to student success. This includes expanded meal programs and a model bringing mental health care providers into schools where our most vulnerable families can easily access them during their daily routines. As this role beyond the direct educational scope continues to expand for all local school systems, greater flexibility to consider student access to these and many other essential services would be a benefit.

In my more than 35 years of professional K-12 education experience, I have dealt with the issue of the school calendar at all levels, including at the state level as the West Virginia State Superintendent of Schools. There, we saw the need to look outside the box to find innovative approaches to the school calendar, ultimately gaining legislative reform to reimagine instructional time with the intent of maximizing academic learning. As educators, the local school system has the keenest insight into how and when to effectively deliver educational content.

Maryland is ripe for an overhaul of educational statute and state-wide policy related to the local school calendar. Current limitations caused by the restrictive requirements of the 180-day academic calendar are not only causing great dismay among educators, but holding our state back from being innovative and forward-thinking when it comes to maximizing instructional time to meet student needs. For these reasons, I request a favorable report of SB0321 from this Committee in order to afford local school systems the opportunity to address this issue directly with the citizens and students we serve.

SB321 Public Schools – Length of School Year and I

Uploaded by: Mara Babb

Position: FWA



SB321 Public Schools – Length of School Year and Innovative School Scheduling Models – Revisions

Sunday, February 12, 2023

EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

Our names are Mara Babb, Subhashi Pradhan, Noor Chaudhry, and Julien Halleman, and we are students of Anne Arundel County and executive team members of the Chesapeake Regional Association of Student Councils (CRASC). We are writing in support of SB321 Length of School Year and Innovative School Scheduling Models-Revisions with certain amendments. If passed, this bill would remove the requirement for schools to be open for 180 days within a 10-month period and instead require them to be open for a minimum of 1,080 hours. Also, it will remove the flexibility for the County Boards of Education to increase or decrease the length of the school year. Finally, it will allow county boards to explore new, creative scheduling models that will lessen lapses in instructional time for schools.

CRASC respectfully proposes the following amendments to SB321:

- Add a section that states, “County boards of education should take into consideration the diversity of their population when determining which holidays to observe.”
- Reinstate §7–103(b) of this article

A major concern surrounding holiday observances is that diverse religious holidays are not observed, despite many students celebrating them. By adding a section that states, “County boards of education should take into consideration the diversity of their population when determining which holidays to observe,” counties would be encouraged to observe the religious holidays most recognized by their specific student population. Hence, this would allow the primary holidays celebrated in a county population to be celebrated, while avoiding taking off school days that most students would be able to attend without religious interference.

The intent of this bill is to give county boards of education more flexibility to ensure that students are making the most of their in-school instructional time. SB321 effectively achieves this by only requiring a 1,080 hour minimum and removing the requirement for 180-school days. One hundred eighty days with an average bell schedule would greatly exceed the 1,080 hour requirement that is already in place. It is unreasonable to require both because the 1,080 hours are easily met by school systems and allow for bell schedule adjustments to accommodate to irregular circumstances. A singular constraint on counties to have 1,080 hours gives them expanded flexibility to determine how long school days should be and when they should be to optimize learning retention.

Additionally, this bill would remove the entirety of section (b), which concerns the autonomy of county boards to adjust school year length, from the article. This is extremely counterintuitive because the purpose of this bill is to authorize “...county boards of education to explore the use of innovative school scheduling models.” Based on the bill language alone it is difficult to determine whether this bill supports expanded county autonomy or not because it attempts to remove a county’s ability to adjust to external circumstances. If amended, this bill would be able to effectively clarify the implications that innovative school scheduling models would have on students and staff. With minor adjustments, this bill would have a profoundly positive impact on counties by giving flexibility to determine what is best for the student body.



The CRASC Legislative Department refers back to the following relevant clauses of the CRASC Platform:

- *CRASC Supports...* Uplifting marginalized student voices in all educational settings; (Plank 10, Clause B)
- *CRASC Opposes...* Discrimination of any form based on race, sex, age, national origin, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or socioeconomic status; (Plank 10, Clause A)
- *CRASC Supports...* Student participation in decision-making processes; (Plank 1, Clause G)

Accordingly, CRASC respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** committee report on SB321.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mara Babb, Secretary of Legislation, babbmara@gmail.com

Noor Chaudhry, Legislative Liaison, noorschaudhry@gmail.com

Julian Halleman, Legislative Liaison, julienh123@icloud.com

Subhashi Pradhan, Legislative Liaison, subhashi_pradhan@hotmail.com

SB321_MSEA_Lamb_INFO.pdf

Uploaded by: Lauren Lamb

Position: INFO

**Informational Testimony regarding Senate Bill 321
Public Schools - Length of School Year and Innovative School Scheduling
Models - Revisions**

**Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment
February 22, 2023**

**Lauren Lamb
Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association offers this informational testimony regarding Senate Bill 321, which would alter the length of school year requirement for pupil attendance during the school year and authorize county boards of education to explore the use of innovative school scheduling models for public schools in the county, including extended year, year-round schooling, 4-day school week, or other models that do not allow for prolonged lapses in instructional time in public schools. Though we appreciate the intent of this legislation, we are concerned about its potential consequences for school personnel and students.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Some of the models permitted may result in inadequate support or resources for students and their families. Research on the social and academic impacts of a four-day school week is inconclusive, but significant questions about equity remain. One study from Oregon State University observed a temporary decline in students' academic performance after schools switched to a four-day week, "particularly among minority, low-income, and special needs students."¹ This approach could also result in the needless criminalization of youth: one study of Colorado school districts'

¹Effects of Four-Day School Weeks on Student Achievement: Evidence from Oregon (2019).
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3390191



four-day school week reported an increase in juvenile arrests for “minor offenses such as shoplifting and other petty theft.”² Even for high school students, a weekday without school could mean another day without school meals, disability accommodations, extracurricular activities, or other essential services that public schools provide.

Further, many districts adopt alternative scheduling models as a cost-cutting approach – but costs, in this case, often mean people. A Stanford University study on the fiscal impact of four-day school weeks in Oklahoma found that decreases in spending were “concentrated specifically in food services and transportation expenditures.”³ For essential education support professionals like bus drivers and food service staff, reducing the days in the school week or school year could result in fewer hours and lower wages. MSEA has serious concerns about how this bill’s implementation on the local level could impact compensation and staffing levels.

The school calendar is one of two illegal subjects of collective bargaining in Maryland, meaning that unions representing school employees would not be permitted to negotiate around many of the scheduling models permitted by this bill.⁴ Implementing alternative school scheduling models without the protection of collective bargaining presents serious concerns about financial and logistical impacts to educators and other school employees.

We urge the committee to consider these concerns around workforce and equity impacts while evaluating this legislation.

² Juvenile Crime and the Four-Day School Week (2016).

<https://www.cob.calpoly.edu/undergrad/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2016/07/paper1606.pdf>

³Effects of Four-Day School Weeks on School Finance and Achievement: Evidence from Oklahoma (2020).

<https://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/wp20-02-v032020.pdf>

⁴Maryland Educ. § 6-510(c)(3).

<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgaweb/Laws/StatuteText?article=ged§ion=6-510&enactments=False&archived=False>