



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 338

TITLE: Primary and Secondary Education - Extended School Year Innovation Grant

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POSITION: Support

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment / Budget and Taxation

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 338.

This bill establishes an Extended School Year Innovation Grant program administered by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Grants are intended to fund development and implementation of an extended school year scheduling model in public primary and secondary schools in the State. A participating school must use grant funds to support the additional personnel and operational expenses associated with implementing an extended school year scheduling model. MSDE must prioritize awarding grants to primary schools and schools with documented learning loss. To the extent practicable, each year MSDE must award a grant to at least one rural, one suburban, and one urban school. For each fiscal year through fiscal 2035, the Governor must include \$25.0 million in the annual budget bill for the program. A participating school must, every second year of implementation, report specified information to the Governor, MSDE, and the General Assembly.

The Covid-19 pandemic created many challenges in the delivery of public education and highlighted the need for innovation and evolution. The pandemic taught us 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. The Extended School Year Grant would allow school systems to implement another innovative concept in public education - a year-round school model.

Research indicates that year-round schools have many benefits including lower stress levels for students due to frequent breaks throughout the year. The same has been found for reducing teacher stress, which in turn has shown an increase in the quality of their instruction. Year-round school can also help deter learning loss and give students and families year-round access to food service, academic support, and other wrap around services all year long. In overcrowded school systems, year-round schools with staggered sessions can help alleviate these physical constraints in school building and lessen the need for portable buildings.

There are certainly downsides to consider with year-round schools; however, the careful planning and research expectations in this legislation will help school systems make the most informed decision on utilizing this innovative model.

Maryland's superintendents unanimously agree that implementing flexible scheduling models at the discretion of local systems provides additional creative options for the delivery of a free and appropriate public education. We embrace researching and piloting new modes of learning, and feel it is a welcome supplement to the high-quality education already provided in Maryland schools. We hope to have the opportunity to work collaboratively with MSDE and many other stakeholders, including teachers and students, to build the most effective and meaningful year-round school program for Maryland public school students.

For these reasons, PSSAM **supports** Senate Bill 338 and urges a favorable report.