



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,

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