



HB881 ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY – PUBLIC SCHOOLS – INNOVATIVE SCHEDULING PILOT PROGRAM

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WAYS AND MEANS

SUPPORT

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) supports **HB881 – Anne Arundel County – Public Schools – Innovative Scheduling Pilot Program**. This bill authorizes the Board of Education of Anne Arundel County (Board) to establish a pilot program in one or more AACPS schools using an innovative scheduling model, including an extended school year, year-round schooling, four-day school week, or any other model approved by the county board. The bill also authorizes any local board of education to explore the use of innovative school scheduling models, provided that the models do not allow for prolonged lapses in instructional time in public schools.

State law currently mandates that schools be open each year for a minimum of 180 days and a certain number of hours, 1,080 at the elementary and middle school levels, and 1,170 at the high school level. These requirements – and the need to meet both criteria – place constraints on school schedules that limit programmatic creativity and result in headaches for families.

For the second consecutive year, one of the legislative priorities of AACPS and the Board is to seek a change in this model and move to a system that permits greater flexibility in school scheduling while not reducing instructional time for students. This dual requirement is arbitrary and outdated, and it unnecessarily restricts our ability best meet the needs of our students, staff, and communities. Additionally, it runs contrary to the key component of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future: innovation.

The flexibility created by passage of this legislation would permit us to pilot innovative scheduling models that have been proven to improve morale and achievement for students and staff. We would like to be able to have discussions about implementing alternative schedules where they would better meet the needs of our students. We can't give any meaningful thought to any innovative school scheduling model without this change in law.

Such an alteration could also eliminate or greatly reduce something most families dislike greatly about our school calendar: early dismissal days. Those days currently still count toward the 180-day requirement each year, but with calendar flexibility we could explore ways to remove some or all from the calendar. The school calendar for the 2023-2024 school year includes 12 early dismissal days for students. This change in law would enable AACPS to provide students with eight full days of instruction rather than 12 partial days of instructions, which would undeniably benefit students. The structure could also lead to full days of professional development for staff, which would also be full days for families to spend with children.

The possibilities are endless, and we could find ourselves down the road with several schedules that meet students' needs in various ways. We can't even begin the journey down that road, however, without this change in legislation.

Of course, we will actively engage our students, families, staff, and other stakeholders on any innovative school scheduling pilot program we pursue.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** committee report on HB881.