

March 28, 2025

Esteemed members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

I am writing today to express my approval of HB 1169, Howard County and Montgomery County – Board of Education – Mandatory School Holidays, a bill that codifies mandatory school holidays.

As a member of the Howard County School System calendar committee, I can tell you that the topic of honoring non-Judeo Christian observances has come up in both the meetings we have had to prepare the 2026-27 school year calendar. The school system also faced considerable concerns from the community this year when they decided to make 3/31, which happens to be Eid al Fitr, a celebration that marks the end of Ramadan, an instructional day due to an excess of snow days.

I support this bill for two main reasons. First, by codifying the days on which school will be closed for holidays, we end the discussion about these observances year after year. This will save the Howard County school system a lot of unnecessary back and forth in planning for each school year. I am new to the calendar committee but know from others who have been a part of it, this is an annual discussion.

Second, and perhaps even more important, by allowing students the day off school to attend holiday observances with their loved ones, we are validating their humanity. As someone raised in a faith that did not dominate my community, I know a little bit about how it feels to have to request special time off for a holiday that others don't observe and don't understand. We preserve the dignity of our community members by sparing them this annual hassle.

As a community, we cannot continue to say how important diversity is to us. Diversity is so much more than having a wide variety of food to choose from. Diversity is about loving and respecting those who have different lived experiences than we do. Codifying these observances is a small way to do that.

Thank you.

Paula Seabright  
Columbia, Maryland