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**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland House Senate,
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
April 1, 2025**

HB1169: UNFAVORABLE

**Howard County and Montgomery County - Board of Education - Mandatory School
Holidays MC 6-25**

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) opposes **Howard County and Montgomery County - Board of Education - Mandatory School Holidays MC 6-25** as a mandate on the operation of the local school system that fails to take into consideration flexibility and local decision making.

HB1169 requires both Howard County Public Schools (HCPSS) and Montgomery County Public Schools to close schools for students in observance of the following holidays:

- Diwali (observed every fall between October and November)
- Eid Al-Adha (observance varies based on the lunar calendar)
- Eid Al-Fitr (observance varies based on the lunar calendar)
- Lunar New Year (observed every winter between late January and mid-February)
- Rosh Hashanah (observed every fall between September and October)
- Yom Kippur (observed every fall between September and October)
- Juneteenth (observed every June on the 19th of the month)

The bill calls for observance on the first day only of each holiday.

HCPSS uses recommendations from an Academic Calendar Planning Committee as the foundation for making a calendar proposal each year to the Board. Considerations for the calendar include continuity of HCPSS instructional programs, adequate time for teachers to engage in professional work and growth activities, respect for religious observances, while also recognizing the need for students, staff, and families to have a traditional break from school work during the spring and winter. Furthermore, the academic calendar adheres to Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR), the HCEA Negotiated Agreement, and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) requirements.

Beyond the current holidays mandated by Education Article §7–103(c), the Board may determine that schools should be closed at other times if it is determined that an educational or operational need exists. To recommend the closing of schools or schools and offices, the Academic Calendar Planning Committee considers the operational need to be closed on a particular day. Additionally, when considering school closures for educational needs, the committee references the HCEA Negotiated Agreement, which currently requires teachers to work a total 193 days. This means that teachers need to work 13 additional days beyond the 180 days that students attend.

The adopted HCPSS calendars for school years 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 incorporate either system closures or professional learning days on or around these holidays as follows:

- Diwali
 - During SY24-25 – Schools closed 10/31 for students (professional learning day for staff))
 - During SY25-26 – Schools closed 10/20 for students (professional learning day for staff))
- Eid Al-Adha
 - During SY24-25 – No closure (falls over summer break)
 - During SY25-26 – Schools and offices closed 5/27
- Eid Al-Fitr
 - During SY24-25 – Schools closed 3/31 for students (professional learning day for staff))
 - [Shifted to a make-up day for inclement weather](#)
 - During SY25-26 – Schools closed 3/20 for students (professional learning day for staff))
- Lunar New Year
 - During SY24-25 – Schools closed 1/29 for students (professional learning day for staff))
 - During SY25-26 – Schools and offices closed 2/17
- Rosh Hashanah
 - During SY24-25 – Schools and offices closed 10/3
 - During SY25-26 – Schools and offices closed 9/23
- Yom Kippur
 - During SY24-25 – No closure (falls over a weekend)
 - During SY25-26 – Schools and offices closed 10/2
- Juneteenth
 - During SY24-25 – Schools and offices closed (falls after the end of the school year)
 - During SY25-26 – Schools and offices closed (falls after the end of the school year)

With the amendments made by the House to only require closure for students instead of both students and staff, potential fiscal impacts of finding additional days for professional learning are mitigated. Impacts for each position type, however, would ultimately be dependent on that year's calendar needs, overall length of the school year, as well as negotiations with representative bargaining units.

Where additional days are needed to meet the 180 day requirement for students, requiring closure under HB1169 may limit local school system options for make-up inclement weather days during the year. Extensions beyond the planned last day of school in June have been known to be unproductive in terms of classroom learning.

By requiring closures in law as opposed to allowing local flexibility to set and adjust the calendar to meet operational needs, HB1169 also presents logistical challenges. Current holidays mandated under Education Article §7–103(c) are statewide and thus have set dates well into the future. Holidays proposed under HB1169, particularly those that are based on the lunar calendar, are often not set until the weeks or days leading up to the event. An example is the just passed celebration of Eid-Al-Fitr. As of the writing of this testimony, simply searching for the date of the holiday online would indicate the holiday was likely to fall around March 29, possibly March 30 or 31. Under current practice, the HCPSS Calendar

Committee includes representation of local religious groups and readily available resources to guide planning and any recommendations around impacts of the school calendar in relation to holidays. Planning typically starts two years in advance of a school year, and the Committee's best efforts are used to make recommendations around the potential fluctuation in dates. Without State guidance on the particular day of closure, however, HCPSS could very easily end up being out of compliance last minute without a practical way to shift dates should HB1169 pass.

To be clear, the Board does not oppose the inclusion of these dates in the local calendar. As illustrated above, they have been incorporated for the current year and the coming school year in Howard County. The concern with the passage of HB1169 – a bill that [failed a vote at the House Howard County Delegation level](#) (between minute markers 40:00 through 46:40) only to be amended in by the House Committee when voting on the Montgomery County version – is the mandate on local control of the school system calendar.

The passage of this bill would set precedent for the legislature to dictate hyper-localized constraints on the school calendar usurping the statutory authority of the Board and educational and operational expertise of those running the school systems.

As a legislative platform, the Board opposes legislative initiatives that have the effect of reducing or circumscribing the authority of an elected local board of education by diminishing its ability to respond to its constituency on issues currently under its authority, as local boards must be accountable directly to their citizenry.

For these reasons, we urge an UNFAVORABLE report on HB1169 from this Committee.