

HB 1169 - MoCo_Elrich_FAV (GA 25) (Senate).pdf

Uploaded by: Marc Elrich

Position: FAV



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

April 1, 2025

TO: The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

FROM: Marc Elrich
County Executive

RE: House Bill 1169 (MC 6-25), *Howard County and Montgomery County – Board of Education – Mandatory School Holidays*

Support

I am writing to express my support for House Bill 1169 (MC 6-25), *Howard County and Montgomery County – Board of Education – Mandatory School Holidays*. Beginning with the 2026-2027 school year, the bill would require the closure of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to student attendance on Diwali, Eid Al-Adha, Eid Al-Fitr; Lunar New Year, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Juneteenth.

The bill is consistent with the MCPS calendar for the 2024-2025 school year. Six of the listed days are non-instructional days on which neither teachers nor students attend school. The seventh day (Eid al Fitr) is currently a professional development day on which teachers attend school, but students do not. The school system's current practice reflects Montgomery County's long history of honoring diverse cultural and religious communities, while also respecting all the other factors that must be considered by the Montgomery County Board of Education when establishing the school calendar each year.

I believe that it is appropriate to codify current MCPS practice to ensure consistency in future school years and respectfully requests that the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee give this bill a favorable report.

cc: Members of the Energy, and the Environment Committee

Seabright 1169 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Paula Seabright

Position: FAV

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

Testimony in Favor of HB1169.pdf

Uploaded by: Syma Siddiqui

Position: FAV

Testimony in Favor of HB1169

March 28, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

Dear Representatives,

I urge you to approve HB1169 which will provide different faith groups in Montgomery County and Howard County equitable treatment by allowing them to each have a religious holiday honored by the Montgomery County and Howard County school district calendars. This will have a tremendous and profound impact on your constituents and community members and demonstrate the legislature's considerations of minority faith group's interests.

I urge you to vote to approve HB1169.

Respectfully,

Syma Siddiqui

HB1169 Mallo Oral Testimony 040125 for EEE - Manda

Uploaded by: Jennifer Mallo

Position: UNF



**Board of Education
of Howard County**

Jolene Mosley, *Chair*

Linfeng Chen, Ph.D., *Vice Chair*

Andrea Chamblee, Esq.

Jennifer Swickard Mallo

Jacky McCoy

Meg Ricks

Antonia Watts

James Obasiolu
Student Member

William J. Barnes
*Superintendent,
Secretary/Treasurer*

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

Good afternoon Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee. My name is Jennifer Swickard Mallo and I am here today to offer testimony in opposition to HB1169 on behalf of the Board of Education of Howard County. I serve as both a Board member and Chair of the Board's Legislative Committee.

As a local elected body, the Board of Education of Howard County is responsible for setting governing policies for the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS), managing a billion dollar budget, employing nearly 9,000 employees, educating 57,000 students, and conducting responsible stewardship of taxpayer revenues. Given this significant obligation entrusted to us by the voters and the intimate understanding of school system operations; we firmly believe the Board is the entity that should have the authority to set the local school system calendar.

While the Board's written testimony outlines more details regarding the calendar setting process in Howard County, I want to focus on a particular concern that had not been an issue in calendar planning until this legislation was introduced

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.

A recent example is the 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 30 if the moon is visible on March 29, but it could be March 29, 30, or 31. The most common practice is that Eid begins when Saudi Arabia declares the crescent moon sighted, marking the end of Ramadan and the start of Eid-Al-Fitr. If HB1169 were to pass, HCPSS could very easily end up being out of compliance at the last minute without a practical way to shift dates.

Under current practice, calendar planning and setting typically starts two years in advance of a school year. The HCPSS Calendar Committee makes recommendations to account for operational impacts of, and honor the holiday celebrations, listed in HB1169 in conjunction with state mandated holidays and stipulations of the contracts with teachers and staff as well as meeting state requirements for number of hours and days of instruction, and operational needs.

Let me be clear, the Board does not oppose the inclusion of the holidays identified in HB1169 in the local calendar as set by the Board on the recommendations of the Calendar Committee based on operational need.

Although only currently applicable to Howard and Montgomery Counties, passing HB1169 sets a precedent for calendar planning that can easily be a slippery slope for other counties that could extend school years and constrain local planning.

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

Montgomery County Board of Education Testimony_HB

Uploaded by: Patricia Ursprung

Position: UNF



MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Expanding Opportunity and Unleashing Potential

15 West Gude Drive ♦ Suite 100 ♦ Rockville, Maryland 20850

BILL: House Bill 1169

TITLE: Howard and Montgomery County - Board of Education –
Mandatory School Holidays MC 6-25

DATE: April 1, 2025

POSITION: Oppose

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

CONTACT: Patricia Ursprung, Coordinator, Legislative Affairs

The Montgomery County Board of Education opposes House Bill 1169.

This bill, as amended, requires the Howard and Montgomery County Boards of Education to close schools to observe Diwali, Ed al-Adha, Ed al-Fitr, Lunar New Year, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Juneteenth.

On September 26, 2024, the Montgomery County Board of Education adopted a legislative platform that contains priority issues and ongoing interests. One of the ongoing interests is preserving local autonomy. Based on this platform position, the Montgomery County Board of Education opposes legislation that would infringe on local control and impose unfunded mandates. Bills that fall into this category require specific school system action and may impact areas such as school calendars, school start times, curriculum, testing, procurement, and other operational decision-making. Some of these bills have a known fiscal impact, other times the fiscal impact is unintentional but still present.

House Bill 1169, as amended, infringes on local control because it dictates areas of the school calendar, requiring schools to close to student instruction on specified holidays. While any calendar mandate would be disfavored by the Board, this particular mandate creates an additional difficulty. Some of the identified holidays follow the lunar calendar, meaning the exact date on which the holiday will occur cannot be known until days or weeks before the event. School systems plan the school year calendar a year or more in advance so cannot guarantee an accurate prediction of the first day of the holidays. Finally, the bill also potentially includes an unfunded mandate as these legally mandated closures could result in a substantial fiscal liability for the school system. The significance of the possible unfunded mandate is unknown, and cannot be known until negotiations with our union partners occur, but estimates suggest the fiscal impact could be more than \$14 million in years where each of the specified holidays fall on a weekday.

As a result of this intrusion on local control that possibly results in an unfunded liability for the school system, the Montgomery County Board of Education opposes House Bill 1169.

HB1169 Howard Co BOE Testimony 040125 for EEE - Ma

Uploaded by: Staff Howard County

Position: UNF



**Board of Education
of Howard County**

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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.