

March 24, 2026

To the members of the Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment:

I am writing in opposition to HB 1084 which authorizes the Montgomery County Board of Education to require public schools within the county to be open for pupil attendance for a minimum number of actual school days or a minimum number of school hours instead of both. This creates a special carve-out for Montgomery County Public Schools, exempting the requirement to make up instructional days lost to weather closures.

As a parent, I do not have interest in adding extra days to the end of the year that will likely not include meaningful instruction. However, we all have a role to play in making our education system the best it can be. Parents advocate for their children's rights and needs and ensure their children are prepared and attend school. Our educators work tirelessly to teach and prepare our students for citizenship and fulfilling lives. I believe that if this bill were passed, the legislature would be neglecting its responsibility to hold our county leaders responsible for making hard decisions in the best interest of children.

This bill overrides the authority of the Maryland State Department of Education and sets a dangerous precedent that state legislators will bail out MCPS from poor planning decisions, encouraging MCPS to continue making scheduling choices without adequate contingency planning or transparency.

This request to meet instructional hours and not days is not reflective of a strategic calendar overhaul and Montgomery County's student outcomes do not indicate that the current calendar is driving rapid improvement in student achievement. MCPS has many tools within its control to ensure that students receive rigorous instruction that meets both the minimum for instructional hours and instructional days, and MCPS should be held accountable to use them.

For example, MCPS has 17 weeks of school before the week of Christmas, and only nine of them are full, five-day weeks of instruction. Frontloading so many days off early in the year increases the pressure put on learning during the months most likely to have weather closures. MCPS could and should create a schedule that maximizes days in school, especially for the first half of the year.

Additionally, MCPS has not created any virtual learning contingencies for weather or other emergencies despite assigning computers to all students. MCPS has the capacity for online learning in case of extended closures and should use it.

This bill places the convenience of adults over the best interests of our children. While I understand the argument that extra days at the end of the year are costly and logistically challenging, this result should prompt our school leaders to reform our system at the local level, not attempt to short circuit both local and state accountability processes that are in place to protect the educational rights of our children.

As for snowstorms, Marylanders cannot stop the weather or an act of God. But, I was taught, God helps those who help themselves. Instead of receiving precedent-setting excuses, Montgomery County should be held accountable to fix what is in its control.

Sincerely,

Shana Young
MCPS Parent, Silver Spring