

Brigid Howe
Written Testimony - HB1084
Favorable with Amendments

I am writing this in my capacity as a parent to a child in the school system.

I believe that HB1084 is flawed legislation that puts school system expediency ahead of the need for instructional time for children.

While this year's "snowcrete" was unusual in the length of closure that resulted from it, MCPS has made the choice for multiple years to schedule the calendar without enough days to cover even routine winter weather closures, much less an extended one. They have also made the choice to schedule makeup days in the calendar that they appear to have no intention of using. For example, scheduled makeup days in the fall can not address winter weather closures. Scheduled makeup days that fall on days with contractual obligations with the teacher's association are not a real option. Scheduled makeup days on religious holidays have proven not to be realistic options either. This means that the calendar written by MCPS and approved by the Board of Education is essentially fictional, leading them to rely on the kindness of the state to grant waivers in the case of unusual closures.

As a parent I understand the desire to keep the end of the school year in mid-June rather than late-June. My high school student has multiple classes where learning after mid-May will already be suboptimal based on the timing of scheduled assessments.

But MCPS's refusal to follow state mandates, willingness to lose multiple instructional days, and being excused from their obligations to the law and our children is not the answer.

I believe the battle is mostly lost for this year, so I am grudgingly supportive of allowing the system to end the school year on June 18. However, the legislation as currently written allows this exception to be in place for next year, as well. That is foolish.

MCPS must revisit the 26-27 calendar to add instructional days that would allow for at least 2-3 days of closure, ensure that scheduled make-up days are actually realistic, and follow state guidance as to having plans that ensure instructional time is met.

This legislation should be amended to limit its scope to the current school year, and sunset on June 30, 2026, or it should not be passed at all.