

Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark and members of the committee,

My name is Paula Seabright. I live in Columbia, MD, and for the past two years I have served as a member of the Howard County Public School System calendar committee. The calendar committee is made up of a diverse cross section of community members as well as school system staff. For the time I have been on the committee, we have supported honoring the Muslim and Hindu holidays and Lunar New Year that this bill proposes adding to the list of school holidays observed in our county.

I understand the HCPSS BOE does not support this bill which is very unfortunate. The board's position does not match the tone of the calendar committee and is inconsistent with the feelings of the community at large. It is also inconsistent with statements made by BOE members at their meeting on Feb 26 during a discussion of how to modify the current school year's calendar because of snow. Members stated they did not support using Eid as a make up day as they had last year, causing confusion and hard feelings in the community.

I urge the delegation to vote favorable on HB1174 with an amendment to include the Hindu holiday of Holi. Doing so would be the respectful way to honor the diversity we so love about our county.

Thank you.

Paula Seabright
Columbia, MD