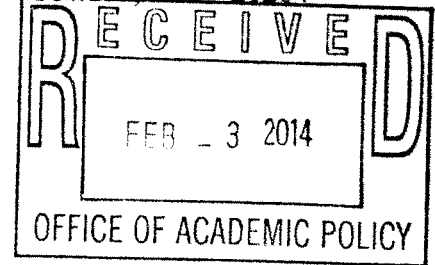


# BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

S. Dallas Dance, Ph.D. • Superintendent • 6901 Charles Street • Towson, MD • 21204



January 31, 2014

Mr. William Cappe  
Maryland State Department of Education  
200 West Baltimore Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Dear Mr. Cappe:

We emphatically believe that the development of a school calendar is and should remain a local school system decision in partnership with the school community and approved by each local Board of Education. The school calendar of each jurisdiction varies depending on such factors as the time for professional development, instructional needs of students, history of weather-related closings, and many other factors just to name a few. A state mandate requiring each school system to open the school year after Labor Day would significantly harm local control and require school systems to extend the school year into the latter part of June or shorten winter and spring breaks, which are important to many families. Such a mandate would have a significant impact on the following:

- Assessments, such as Advanced Placement exams and high school assessments, which are required for graduation, are given in May. With having to meet the mandated minimum number of days and hours, delaying the start of the school year would decrease the instructional time to prepare students for these examinations, thereby potentially harming the students' outcomes on these assessments.
- State and local testing windows would need to be adjusted which delays reporting the data to the local school systems. Such data is invaluable in assessing school and student performance. In addition these data are need to finalize students' schedules.
- To maintain a highly effective teaching staff, adequate professional development is required. Professional development days are built into the school calendar. A later school start would further extend the school year in order to provide those professional development days. These professional development days are established based on negotiated contracts between the system and the bargaining unit(s). This in many cases could potentially be a financial burden to school systems.
- Centralized summer school and other school-based summer programs are factors that are considered in the development of a school calendar. School systems schedule summer school within a timeframe that allows teachers time between the end of the school year and the beginning of summer school to prepare and time at the end of summer school and the beginning of the school year for vacation and other personal matters. Localized control of the development of a school calendar is critical, so programs which differ among school systems and the needs of teaching staff are adequately addressed.

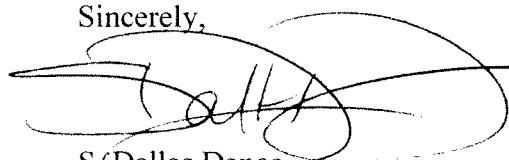
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- There is a narrow window between the end and beginning of the school year when any construction on or maintenance of our school facilities takes place. Starting those projects as early in the summer months as possible is more advantageous to ensure school readiness.

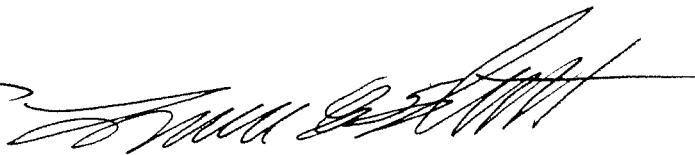
School calendars are developed with input from various members of a school system's community. Their input is invaluable and represents the views of the local community in meeting the needs of its student population. In Baltimore County Public Schools, our community is in agreement that bringing students back to school prior to Labor Day is the most efficient way to transition children from summer break to the new school year and to meet the needs of our student population.

Developing the school calendar engages the community in public education and provides all of us with an opportunity to work together in the best interests of our students and staff. For these reasons, we strongly support that the development of a school calendar remain under the autonomy of each school system.

Sincerely,



S. Dallas Dance  
Superintendent



Lawrence E. Schmidt, Esq.  
President, Baltimore County Board of Education

sdd/mp/bls

c: Members of the Board of Education of Baltimore County