



40 South Second Street, Oakland, Maryland 21550
Telephone: 301-334-8900, <http://www.garrettcountypublicschools.org>

Members of the Board of Education

Mr. Thomas A. Carr, President
Mr. Rodney A. Reckart, Vice-President
Mrs. Cynthia M. Downton, Associate Member
Mr. Matthew A. Paugh, Associate Member
Mrs. Charlotte A. Sebold, Associate Member
John R. Major, Student Board Member

Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Janet S. Wilson

January 30, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Cappe,

We have been given your address as a conduit for comments to the Labor Day Task Force. We write as the elected board of Maryland's westernmost county in defense of our ability to govern in accordance with local needs and, most importantly, in defense of the education of our children.

Our board sets the school year based on input from a committee composed of school officials, parents, and interested members of the community. We begin with certain constraints that are already set in place: 180 days, national holidays which we embrace, teacher association requests which we recognize, preparations for athletic competitions, an annual total of a million miles of mountain roads and the severest winter conditions in the state. It is imperative that we be able to begin our academic year before the Labor Day weekend.

You have or will have heard the necessity for preparing our students for mandated testing not only state assessments, but for nationally set exams such as advanced placement. In fairness to our students, they need time to be prepared before these exams, not after.

We are sensitive to the needs of the business community, long our best friends. In that vein we would like to remind the Task Force that winter sports are nearly as important to our local economy as summer recreation. We have been told about other states having their economies improved by a post Labor Day start, but we have seen no proof that this is due to the academic calendar rather than to overall improved economic conditions since 2008.

Our school year, as it stands, keeps children out of the classroom during the warmest part of the local (short) summer. Two thirds of our schools do not have air-conditioning. Our major concerns are boilers to keep students and staff warm and roofs sturdy enough to withstand the heavy snowfall.

Because of the annual snowfall and the severe temperatures our students have lost all but one spring break since, at least, 2000. The school year is increased at the end almost every year. We are doing what we can with what we have. We cannot implement a later starting date particularly when the reasoning is theory and not proven. We do have proof that already, in School Year 2013-14, we have been closed 12 days due to the weather, and we are only at the end of January.

We rely on the Task Force to resolve that local authority is best suited to establishing its calendar. We appreciate your efforts in transmitting our concerns to that committee.

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Carr

Don A. [unclear]

Cynthia M. [unclear]

Charlotte A. Sebold

Matthew [unclear]

Garrett County Board of Education

cc: Janet S. Wilson, Ph.D., Superintendent