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Don't reject out of hand a post-Labor Day start for schools

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Advertisement

Your recent editorial significantly minimized the need to explore a post-Labor Day start to Maryland's public school calendar ("One week and counting," Aug. 19).

It was disappointing that The Sun would issue such a dismissive opinion without first giving the task force established earlier this year by the General Assembly a chance to comprehensively study this proposal and issue a report.

With Maryland's unique natural bounty, our state provides families with countless opportunities to spend the last weeks of August exploring the scenic mountains of Western Maryland, taking advantage of the richness of the Chesapeake Bay or enjoying time together on the beautiful shoreline in Ocean City.

While the \$74.3 million in direct economic activity that is lost by starting schools in August may not seem significant to some, a couple weeks of lost or diminished revenue can often be "make or break" for many family-owned businesses.

The last weeks of August are a critical time for the 350,000 Maryland farmers and 340,000 Marylanders employed in the tourism industry — our state's first- and fourth-largest commercial industries, respectively. There are also countless students and teachers who rely on supplemental summer income to support themselves.

With the fleeting amount of time Maryland families have to spend together at the end of summer, along with the positive impact changing the school calendar could have on the Maryland economy, we do our citizens a disservice by prejudging policies before taking the time to examine them thoroughly.

Jim Mathias and Wendell Beitzel

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