

## Let summer last

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Citing the benefits to Maryland families, small businesses and tourism overall, Comptroller Peter Franchot renewed his call for a policy change to have school systems in the state begin classes after Labor Day and released an economic impact study on the effects of his plan.

“The chance for families to spend precious time together and to build lifelong memories during that final, end-of-summer vacation has been lost by the decision to begin school a week, or even 10 days, before Labor Day,” said Franchot. “Not only does this cut into the opportunity for Marylanders to spend more time together as a family, but it also has a negative impact on small businesses. In these tough economic times, we need to do all that we can to support small businesses and promote economic activity, not cause unnecessary harm to them for no apparent reason.”

With nationally renowned vacation destinations like Ocean City, Deep Creek Lake and Baltimore’s Inner Harbor, tourism is the fourth largest industry in the state. Welcoming more than 32 million domestic travelers annually in recent years, the tourism sector employs more than 340,000 Marylanders. While Labor Day weekend is most commonly associated with family trips to resort destinations, it also coincides with other major events occurring throughout the state, including the Maryland State Fair in Timonium, the Grand Prix of Baltimore and four weeknight home games at Orioles Park at Camden Yards.

Instead of reducing the 180-day school year, the comptroller is confident the state’s school systems would be able to adjust their calendars throughout the academic year without losing time for instruction in the classroom. The flexibility of adjusting winter and spring breaks or eliminating some of the school closure dates scattered throughout the school calendar would be left to each of Maryland’s 24 school systems.

“This isn’t just necessary because of the \$7.7 million in state and local tax revenue it would create for the priorities we care about, or the \$74.3 million in direct economic activity it would generate in the midst of a sluggish recovery,” said Franchot. “Beyond the money or economic impact, it’s about families who save up a little each paycheck in order to spend one week each year in Ocean City or Deep Creek Lake, or catch an Orioles game or visit the Maryland State Fair before the children return to school.”

The economic impact estimate only includes the direct economic and tax impacts. Incorporating the indirect and induced activity would result in a significant upward revision of the total impact.

We think it sounds like a good idea. Who wouldn't like a few more weeks of summer vacation? And it's also good for the economy. Sounds like a "win-win" situation.

It's already too late for this year. Schools begin next week, a week before Labor Day, across the Mid-Shore. But let's hope school systems statewide take heed and revise their calendars for 2014-2015.