



Michael J. Martirano, President

November 6, 2013

Mr. William Cappe – Co-Chair
Task Force to Study a Post-Labor Day Start Date of Maryland Public Schools
Maryland State Department of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Dear Task Force Members:

As the elected representative of the twenty-four public school superintendents of Maryland (PSSAM), I appreciate the opportunity to express our position on the possibility of seeking a state law requiring all school systems to commence each school year after Labor Day.

All twenty-four public school superintendents are **OPPOSED** to any legislation that would remove local decision making regarding the school calendar from the local board of education. The local school system calendar is best determined after thorough discussion and review by the constituents in each local jurisdiction.

Superintendents offer that the far greater significance to the question you study is the fact that it is the incorrect discussion to have. The one-hundred and eighty day school-year averaging six and one-half hours of attendance for students each day is no longer adequate for the expectations and requirements to ensure our children are properly prepared for success in the 21st Century. The future of public education in the United States, and therefore, in Maryland will feature year-round aspects offering additional days and extended time where all students will have opportunities to seek enhancements to their learning and receive supports to ensure that mastery of necessary knowledge and skill is acquired.

With all due respect, superintendents offer that the correct question is how will the State and local governments partner with local constituents to address the unique geographic and cultural needs that distinguish our access to resources while all preparing for the same desired outcome. That is high school graduates prepared to perform and live successfully in this rapidly changing global society.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide our view on this important matter. Please call upon us if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Martirano, Ed.D.
President, PSSAM

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cc: Dr. Carl Roberts, Executive Director of PSSAM
Maryland Superintendents

Today's leaders inspiring tomorrow's future.

Senate Bill 963 – Chapter 336: Task Force to Study
Post-Labor Day Start Date for Maryland Public Schools

Position Statement

Local school system superintendents are opposed to any state mandate that would require all local school systems to start a school year on a predetermined date established by the Maryland General Assembly and Governor.

Maryland Law currently requires that public school systems have a school calendar that includes a minimum of 180 days for students. Maryland School Law, Title 4-101 that discusses county boards of education cites *Control of education matters: Educational matters that affect the counties shall be under the control of a county board of education in each county.*

This is interpreted to mean that given consideration to the 180 minimum student days and other mandated state holidays, local school boards upon the recommendation of the superintendent and the school-calendar committee determine the school-year calendar.

The school system calendar committee members are representative of administrators, teachers, parents, community leaders and students. Several meetings are conducted at which the parameters associated with the August-June calendar are taken into consideration along with other local preferences. Ultimately a proposed calendar is approved by the committee and presented to the local board of education for adoption.

Calendar considerations include but are not limited to:

- State mandated holidays,
- Locally approved holidays,
- State and local student testing dates,
- History of inclement weather resulting in school delays and closings,
- Number and length of time associated with the interruptions of student instruction,
- Other local preferences,
- Training & professional staff development needs of employees.

Local school system superintendents believe that the responsibility to determine the school system calendar for students and employees given the wide diversity of the twenty-four jurisdictions rests properly with the local boards of education. The creation and adoption of the school calendar allows for constituent input and critique each year dependent upon the variables under consideration.

Additional Consideration

Local school system superintendents offer that the discussion of a school-year calendar that has 180 days for students with most of them attending an average of six and one-half hours per day is significantly out of touch with the reality of learning research and the requirement to address individual student needs. To successfully prepare all students for 21st Century challenges much more flexibility along with the support of state and local leaders is required. Consideration includes but is not limited to:

- Additional days and more flexibility of those days for students,
- Longer or extended days applied with flexibility to address individual student learning needs,
- Access to alternative learning methods,
- Access to digital learning supports,
- Reduction of lengthy breaks in student learning (e.g. summer),
- Individual student choice in regard to when and how to receive and gain access to learning opportunities.

Local school superintendents believe that serious research and discussion with subsequent action must occur to determine if the current delivery model for students attending Maryland's public schools is satisfactory given the critical demands that must be addressed. The question is not when to start a 180 school-year but whether our current state mandate is appropriate for student learning in the 21st Century?