

Post-Labor Day School Start

To members of the task force studying this issue:

As the lead sponsor of a bill to create a statewide School Starting Date on the day after Labor Day, I am very pleased to have been named to this task force. In fact, I not only sponsored the bill to change the date, I was also the lead sponsor in the House of Delegates of the bill that created this task force. Although I am enthusiastic about making this change, I recognize that some legislators and educators would feel more comfortable after studying the issue in depth through this task force.

I very much regret that I am unable to attend the first meeting. My obligations as a member of the House Environmental Matters Committee require that I attend a site visit in my District the very day and time of the first meeting of the Task Force. This site visit has been planned and postponed several times and has been 3 years in the making. It will showcase the environmental work done by a small community in my district, including stormwater management and flood control, "green" paving, LED street lighting and rain gardens as well as urban agriculture and more.

I am very disappointed that I cannot attend the first meeting, but please don't take my absence to mean lack of interest. I hope you can forward to me any and all minutes, presentations and discussion points that come up.

I also would like to offer my assistance with any logistical needs of the Task Force, including but not limited to helping to find locations for meetings, outreach to members, stake holders and the public.

A bit of background: Last year, August 20 was the first day of school in Prince George's County. This year it was August 19. The trend to earlier opening has reached the point where parents, students, teachers and others in the community are raising serious questions. They are joining the longstanding call from the business community and the Maryland Tourism Industry in asking for a return to the traditional opening on the day after Labor Day.

The contrast to neighboring Virginia, which has this single statewide start date is dramatic and I believe it puts Maryland at a competitive disadvantage in many ways.

I wish to note that the proposed change in the start date should have absolutely no impact on the education that our Maryland children receive. It does not shorten or change the number of days and hours of the school year in any way.

It does create statewide consistency and predictability which is so essential for planning, and makes it easier for students, teachers and families who must deal with transfers from one school district to another during the school year. It also helps businesses that rely on summer or seasonal employees and visitors. They too can plan their entire season, and hire locally instead of bringing in workers from other states or other countries.

One more thing: I know that there are those who are interested in other changes to the school calendar. I do not believe that those issues are within the mandate of this particular task force but I personally would be willing to discuss such issues in another forum in my role as a legislator.

Thanks to all who have accepted the responsibility to serve on the task force. I hope to see all of you at the next meeting.

Sincerely,

Anne Healey

Delegate, District 22