

never experienced an "active shooter"

over and determined that "it won't protect"

also being used to shore up the Bay bridges

emergency

SDN AUG 16, 2013

Start school after Labor Day, Md. is urged

Lawmakers, Franchot, study say waiting till after holiday would help state's economy

By ERIN COX

The Baltimore Sun

Eastern Shore and Western Maryland lawmakers joined Comptroller Peter Franchot on Thursday in calling for school to start after Labor Day.

The proposed change, hailed as a way to promote family time and extend the tourist season, would have a \$74.3 million economic impact, the Bureau of Revenue Estimates said in a new report. School starts this year in most school systems around the state Aug. 26, a week before Labor Day.

"It's one of the traditions we should bring back," Franchot said on the Ocean City boardwalk. "I almost think starting school

before Labor Day is un-American."

Maryland is among several states across the country considering delaying the school calendar until after the holiday. Franchot, who began in 2012 to lobby for a later start to the school year, called Labor Day "a common-sense capstone to our summer."

The Maryland General Assembly created a task force this year to study pushing back the start of school. Education officials and amusement park owners are among those studying whether the 180 days required for the state's school year could be compressed into September through early June.

Delaware lawmakers created a similar task force this year. Iowa did so last year. Alabama, Mississippi and Michigan passed laws forbidding schools to start before the end of August. The issue is a perennial question before Pennsylvania lawmakers.

Proponents of earlier start dates across the country say they give students more time to prepare for mandatory tests and

more time near the holidays to complete college applications, among other reasons. The change would also require scores of Maryland families to find an additional week or two of summer child care.

If school did not start until after Labor Day in Maryland, an estimated 8.5 percent of Maryland families with school-age children would take an extra in-state vacation to Baltimore. Deep Creek Lake in Garrett County or Ocean City, the new state report said. Another 5.2 percent of those families would take an out-of-state trip, and many others would spend more money at home.

Howard County businessman Bob Henley, a father of four, said his family would take advantage of a later start date.

A pre-Labor Day school start "creates a lot of disruption at the end of summer," Henley said. "We can't go anywhere, we can't do anything because the kids are back in school. It's like losing a long weekend."

Several business owners and Ocean City

residents at Franchot's event said the tourist industry continues in town even when school has started, creating community tension and lost revenue. Students have to wait for school buses on streets crowded with disoriented out-of-town drivers. Part-time high school employees go back to school, creating a labor shortage while out-of-town guests keep coming.

"We're all scrambling to keep our doors open," said Royette Shepherd, co-owner of Hooper's Crab House.

Ocean City Mayor Rick Meehan and a half-dozen other elected officials joined Franchot in calling for a longer summer break. Sen. James N. Mathias Jr., who represents Ocean City, said pushing school back to after Labor Day might only be the starting point.

"We get this done, maybe we can push it back even further," he said.
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