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June 25, 2014

The Honorable Martin O'Malley  
Governor of Maryland  
State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr.  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Michael E. Busch  
Speaker of the House  
H-101 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Governor O'Malley, President Miller and Speaker Busch:

On behalf of the **Task Force to Study a Post-Labor Day Start Date for Maryland Public Schools**, I respectfully submit the final report. This report completes a year-long effort by the Task Force to fulfill its charge to study the impact of moving the start date of the public school year in the State to after Labor Day addressing the following charges:

- The education system, including the academic calendar, planning, administration, and facilities use;
- The economy; and
- Summer tourism.

The Task Force consisted of nineteen members including the Chair. The broad nature of the Task Force's charge and the challenge of doing a comprehensive job required an enormous amount of work and effort by the Task Force's members and staff.

The members of the Task Force were divided into three groups of six members. Each group was assigned one of the charges listed above. They were asked to use data provided at each of the meetings and also to independently collect data to formulate preliminary recommendations to be presented to the Task Force as it related to their assigned topic.

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During the course of the eight meetings held over the last ten months, the members had the benefit of hearing from thirteen speakers, and had the opportunity to listen to presentations and to ask questions. Further, Task Force members were provided with more than eighty charts, graphs, news articles and reports.

The Task Force received and considered a report in favor of a post Labor Day start entitled: "Economic Impact of a Post-Labor Day State Date for Maryland Public Schools" prepared by the Bureau of Revenue Estimates, dated August 24, 2013. The data in the report highlighted the benefits to Maryland's economy and families if schools were to begin after Labor Day. It reports that 8.5% of the 514,680 families with school age children would take either a new out-of-state trip or overnight trip in Maryland; another 5.2% would take a new out-of-state trip; and the remaining families would devote at least one additional day to family recreational activities if Maryland Public Schools started after Labor Day. More importantly, it reports that Maryland would actualize \$74.3 million in direct economic activity as a result of the increased tourism. Support for a post-Labor Day start date was also received from Visit Baltimore and the Maryland Hotel and Lodging Association.

Task Force members were also provided with letters received from the local school superintendents; local boards of education; the Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE); and the Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), each voicing their opposition to mandating a public school start date after Labor Day. Many factors were presented, including, but not limited to, community preferences and traditions; local calendar flexibility; negotiated staff contract issues; socio-economic issues; facility issues; and the fact that under present law, local superintendents and local boards of education currently have the authority to select the start date that best fits community need and preference.

Each workgroup had the opportunity to make sub-recommendations within their respective workgroups. Sub-recommendations considered by the education workgroup include that school systems should move toward ensuring that 75% of their facilities have air-conditioning. School systems with less than 75% of their buildings with air-conditioning may apply for an exemption from the post-Labor Day start date. Another sub-recommendation was to repeal the law mandating Easter Monday as a school holiday. The education work group also recommended that school systems use alternate methods to provide professional development for teachers, therefore reducing the number of scheduled professional days in the calendar.

The economy workgroup considered issues such as electrical usage; the economies of families; employment opportunities for both teachers and students; the impact of the start date on tourism and other large scale industries; the start dates of Colleges and Universities; and feedback from local school superintendents. A sub-recommendation was made to consider starting school no earlier than September 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.

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The summer tourism workgroup considered issues such as occupancy rates for hotels in the State, and looked at the tourist destinations and attractions in the State of Maryland. As sub-recommendations, this work group recommends a post-Labor Day start date; recommends that local calendar committees review their structure of holidays for a balance point; and recommends that the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) review its policies regarding athletic starting dates.

At the May 19, 2014 meeting, the Task Force considered the sub-recommendations of the workgroups; however, the Task Force accepted and passed only one recommendation. A motion was made to recommend to the Governor a post-Labor Day start date for Maryland Public Schools. This motion was carried by a vote of 12 votes for the recommendation and 3 votes against the recommendation.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve the citizens of the State of Maryland in this important work. Again, I would like to express my appreciation to the members of the Task Force and to the Maryland State Department of Education staff for their participation and hard work.

Sincerely,



Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent of Schools

LML/BC