



HB 53
2/14/2019

Testimony offered on behalf of:
THE GARRETT COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

IN OPPOSITION TO:
HB 53 – County Boards of Education – Length of School Year – Adjustments

Ways & Means Committee
February 14, 2019

On behalf of the Garrett County Chamber of Commerce, representing 600 member organizations in Western Maryland, I write to express our opposition to HB 53 County Boards of Education – Length of School Year – Adjustments.

Starting schools after Labor Day and ending the school year by June 15 has had a positive impact on Maryland without negatively impacting our students. As evidenced by the numbers since the Executive Order was signed in August 2016, tourism has increased generating more revenue for the local school districts and the State.

- Garrett County saw an 11% increase in accommodations tax collections, a 53% increase in heads on beds and an 8.3% increase in sales tax collections for August 2017 over August 2016.
- Garrett County saw a 24.2 % increase in accommodations tax collections for August 2018 over August 2017.

These increases are directly linked to starting schools after Labor Day and these additional tax dollars help fund our schools. Specifically, in Maryland, the \$2.4 billion in tax revenue generated by visitor spending saves every Maryland Household \$1,100, and every 252 visits generates enough state and local tax revenue to fund a public school student for one year.

Additionally, there is no evidence that starting school after Labor Day and ending by June 15 has hindered the education of students in Maryland. In fact, in Worcester County where school has been starting after Labor Day since before the Executive Order, statewide PARCC testing for the 2016-17 school year showed that Worcester County schools surpassed all other counties in five assessments. Also, a report produced by Virginia Commonwealth University regarding Virginia's post Labor Day school start concluded that there is no correlation between starting the school year before Labor Day and student scores on the Standards of Learning tests.





HB 53
2/14/2019

It's important to remember that the a statewide a statewide task force appointed by then Governor O'Malley, voted 11-4 in May of 2014 to support a post Labor Day start for Maryland public schools. And polls across the state have shown huge support for the Executive Order. A poll released by the Sarah T. Hughes Field Politics Center at Goucher College found that 72 percent of those asked said they supported moving the start of school until after Labor Day. An online poll conducted by the Cumberland Times News measured more than 80% support for this initiative. And a poll conducted by WJZ-TV found that 88% said yes, schools should start after Labor Day and only 12% said no. If the polls aren't enough, a petition was signed by 13,244 Marylanders to support starting schools after Labor Day. That is resounding support for the initiative.

There is no strong rationale for this bill. If it is merely about autonomy for the school boards, then our communities are losing out. The polling is proof positive that the Marylanders support starting school after Labor Day and ending by June 15. Unfortunately, the school boards are not always cognizant of the needs of our communities. If polling is considered an important rationale for an issue like minimum wage then it should just as important when considering Maryland public school calendars.

With all of the support by Marylanders and evidence to prove that starting school after Labor Day and ending by June 15 is beneficial to Maryland, the Chamber respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE committee report on HB 53.**

Sincerely,

Nicole Christian, SOA, CCE

President & CEO

Garrett County Chamber of Commerce, Inc.

(301) 387-8745 office

(301) 616-0396 mobile

www.visitdeepcreek.com

2019 President of Maryland Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives

