

Governor Signs Executive Order to Mandate Calendars

MABE issues [News Release](#) to advocate for boards to retain local control of school calendars

On August 31, 2016, Governor Hogan signed an [Executive Order](#) mandating a post-Labor Day start for all of Maryland's public schools beginning in 2017. The Order further mandates that the school year end by June 15th. MABE strongly opposes this initiative as contrary to the principle of local governance, and the traditional role of boards of education and their communities in setting school calendars. The strict limitation of ending school on June 15th will require not only new school calendars but new teacher and employee contracts. The time and money spent on these negotiations would be better spent on educating our 870,000 public school students.

MABE encourages all local board members to make the following points in conversation with local and state legislators, and community members. **At the grassroots level, local board members need to advocate for the role local boards of education must continue to play in setting school system policies and procedures.**

Talking Points

- Setting the school calendar has always been a local matter and should remain so.
- MABE takes no position on whether any local board should choose to adopt a start date after Labor Day. This and other policy decisions should continue to reside with each local board.
- The state law is clear. The school year must be at least 180 days and 1,080 hours long; and waivers can be requested from the State Board of Education. Under state law, the setting of school calendars is left entirely to local boards of education.
- The school calendar is education policy because it impacts when teaching and learning begin.
- Local boards serve a broad constituency of parents and students, teachers and principals, and businesses and other community groups.
- The recently enacted federal education law, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), returns a great deal of decision-making power to local boards of education. Even the federal government sees the wisdom in protecting local control of education policy.
- The State does not know what is best for a local school calendar – whether it's the length of Spring Break or the first and last days of the school year.
- Adopting a statewide post-Labor Day start of the school year is supported more by the tourist industry than by educators.
- School calendars reflect state testing schedules, state mandated holidays, the history of weather-related closings, addressing the summer learning gap, and other important local considerations.
- Maryland's twenty-four local boards must be allowed to balance community priorities and available resources in pursuit of the overarching goal of improving student learning.
- Maryland's local boards of education oppose mandating a post-Labor Day start date because it would not adequately reflect local community considerations - considerations which local boards must always balance in favor of advancing student learning.