

BILL: House Bill 1250
TITLE: Education – Length of the School Year – Declared State of Emergency
(Kathryn Marie Carmello’s Law)
POSITION: SUPPORT
DATE: February 28, 2020
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means Committee
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) strongly supports this legislation to provide common sense recognition that a school board should be authorized to adjust its adopted school year calendar in response to a declared state of emergency.

Specifically, House Bill 1250 would authorize a local board of education to decrease the length of the school year for each school day affected by a declared state of emergency. This flexibility would be provided to local boards without requiring the approval of the State Board of Education. The bill also repeals the authority of the State Board to open schools on holidays in the case of emergency. In these ways, House Bill 1250 is wholly consistent with the principle of community control over school calendars.

The “Community Control of School Calendars Act” enacted in 2019 alleviates the barriers to local decision making on school calendars, by authorizing each local board of education to establish the annual school calendar including the first day of school and last day of school. MABE greatly appreciates that the law enacted in 2019 now allows each local board to determine how to craft the entire local school calendar including holidays, professional development days, parent conferences, election days and other factors. House Bill 1250 would provide local boards with one additional element of local discretion that should provide for administrative efficiency in responding to school calendar issues caused by declared states of emergency.

MABE successfully opposed legislation for several years which would have prohibited public schools from opening before the day after Labor Day. Then in 2016 Governor Hogan issued Executive Orders mandating a post-Labor Day start and end-date no later than June 15 for all of Maryland’s public schools beginning in 2017. MABE objected to the Executive Orders, and sought legislation to repeal them, in order to preserve and protect the rights of local communities and their respective boards of education to adopt school calendars.

Again, MABE supports House Bill 1250 because it would provide local boards with one additional element of local discretion that should provide for administrative efficiency in responding to school calendar issues caused by declared states of emergency.

For these reasons, MABE urges a favorable report on House Bill 1250.