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State Superintendent of Schools

BILL:	Senate Bill (SB) 321	DATE:	February 22, 2023
SUBJECT:	Public Schools - Length of School Year and Innovative School Scheduling Models - Revisions	COMMITTEE:	Education, Energy, and the Environment
POSITION:	Support		
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The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) supports with amendments Senate Bill (SB) 321 – *Public Schools - Length of School Year and Innovative School Scheduling Models - Revisions*. The bill as drafted encourages local education agencies (LEAs) to explore innovative school scheduling models but removes the Maryland State Department of Education’s (MSDE’s) ability to review and permit LEAs to adopt plans that impact the length of the school year. Removing Department approval of LEA plans without placing new requirements means that the bill, as drafted, does not have safeguards in place to ensure Departmental review.

As a result – and as indicated above – if all local education agencies utilize the flexibility afforded in this legislation, disruptions in services, support, and assessment calendars may create significant operational impacts at the Department and may impact Department operational requirements associated with State and federal reporting timelines and Blueprint/grant program implementation.

MSDE supports and encourages spurring innovation. However, certain models have deleterious effects on student outcomes, particularly the allowance of four-day school weeks or the proliferation of asynchronous instruction days that count as full instructional days.

As evidenced most recently in Colorado, these models are shown to negatively impact student outcomes and create challenges associated with workforce recruitment and retention. MSDE recommends including safeguards to protect against or give MSDE the ability to protect against models that have been shown to negatively impact schools and students.

MSDE otherwise supports the bill but with amendments to restore language requiring MSDE review and approval of programs so that MSDE can ensure continuity of required programs and services. MSDE respectfully requests that you consider this letter of support with amendments as you deliberate Senate Bill 321. Please contact Justin Dayhoff, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Financial Planning, Operations, and Strategy by phone at 410-767-0439.