



**SB321 PUBLIC SCHOOLS – LENGTH OF SCHOOL YEAR AND INNOVATIVE SCHOOL SCHEDULING
MODELS - REVISIONS**

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EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

SUPPORT

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) strongly supports **HB510 Public Schools – Length of School Year and Innovative School Scheduling Models – Revisions**. Current State law requires public schools to be in session for **both** 180 days **and** a minimum number of seat hours (1,080 at the elementary and middle school levels, and 1,170 at the high school level) in a given school year. This bill alters the length of school year requirement for student attendance to require a minimum of 1,080 hours of student attendance each school year. Additionally, this bill authorizes county boards of education to explore the use of innovative school scheduling models, including an extended year, year-round schooling, a four-day school week, or other school scheduling models that do not allow for prolonged lapses in instruction time in public schools.

As the Maryland State Department of Education and local school systems across the State seek innovative approaches to educating students through the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Blueprint), this rigid and outdated artificial constraint on school year scheduling remains, preventing school systems from exploring innovative instructional programs and school operations that best meet the needs of our students. The Blueprint is all about innovation, and so is this bill. However, it is important to note that this bill **does not force any school system to do anything different than it does now**.

This bill does allow for flexibility to do things like eliminate early dismissals that are a source of nearly universal consternation among students, families, and staff. It also allows flexibility to add minutes to the school day and actually shorten the school year – creating a longer summer.

This change will provide local school systems with more flexibility to tailor instructional programs and school operations to innovatively best meet the needs of their students, while not diminishing in any way requirements regarding the amount of instruction provided to those students. The flexibility we seek is crucial as we explore the use of new and innovative school scheduling models to continue to combat learning loss caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and to invigorate education in Maryland.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** committee report on SB321.