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BILL: House Bill 1043
TITLE: Required Number of School Days or Hours
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POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
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House Bill 1043 alters the requirement that certain public schools be open for at least 180 days and a minimum of 1,080 hours during a 10-month period in each school year to require that the schools be open for at least 180 days or a minimum of 1,080 hours during a 10-month period in each school year; and providing that certain funding for schools may not be reduced if there are fewer than 1,080 school hours under certain circumstances.

PSSAM thanks the sponsor and fully **supports** House Bill 1043.

The school calendar is a very complicated and important matter in every school community. Maryland's twenty-four school systems each convene calendar committees that include all interested school and community stakeholders to ensure they have input into the process before a final calendar is approved by the local school board. Development of the school calendar also must consider athletic programs, federal and state-mandated testing programs, administrative and professional development days for educators, collective bargaining agreements, parent-teacher conference dates, religious and community holidays and events, forecasting inclement weather days, and much more.

PSSAM strongly advocates that school-related calendar decisions should be determined locally and based on meeting the academic needs of our students, providing professional development for our faculties, and honoring the wishes of our communities. Meeting the 180-day school calendar regulation is complex for Maryland's twenty-four school systems. On August 31, 2016, Governor Larry Hogan issued an Executive Order which requires all Maryland public schools to open for pupil attendance no earlier than the Tuesday immediately following the nationally observed Labor Day holiday. The Executive Order also requires that the school year for every public school shall be no later than June 15. The compressed school year has created numerous and complex situations that school systems are working hard to address.

PSSAM greatly appreciates any legislation that gives local boards of education control over school calendar issues. House Bill 1043 would provide local school systems with much needed flexibility on this issue. We appreciate the intent of this bill to alter the requirement for public schools to be open for 180 days during a 10-month period to include the option of 1,080 school hours to meet the legislated requirement. When it is necessary for a school or schools to be closed for inclement weather or other unforeseen circumstances such as no electricity, heat, or plumbing issues for example, the addition of meeting 1,080 school hours is a fair and reasonable compromise.

For the reasons provided above, PSSAM fully **supports** House Bill 1043 and requests a favorable committee report.