



# **MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION**

850 Hungerford Drive ♦ Room 123 ♦ Rockville, Maryland 20850

March 10, 2017



The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.  
Governor  
The State of Maryland  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1925

Dear Governor Hogan:

On behalf of the Montgomery County Board of Education, I am writing to share our perspective on your Executive Order stipulating the start and end of the school year in Maryland. Since you issued your Executive Order on August 31, 2016, the Board of Education has worked carefully and deliberately to adopt a calendar consistent with the guidelines contained in it. In the process of our work, we have discovered several unintended consequences of the parameters set by the Executive Order as it intersects with the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR). We are requesting your review of these issues to provide clarity on how school districts in Maryland should proceed in developing school calendars in future years.

## **Emergency Closings**

COMAR requires that school systems take two steps to be eligible for a waiver of the 180-day requirement for the length of the school year. First, school systems must make modifications to make up instruction within the calendar, and second, school systems must demonstrate that the school year has been extended by five days. Without taking these two steps in designing a school calendar, school districts are not eligible for a waiver from the 180-day requirement should they need one in a year of extreme weather conditions. For Montgomery County, we have needed to apply for a waiver 3 times in the last 10 years due to extreme weather conditions that prevented us from opening school 180 days.

In December 2016, we received guidance from the Maryland State Department of Education that in order to be compliant with COMAR and extend the school year by five days at the end of the school year, districts must build these emergency weather make-up days into the schedule before June 15, 2018, to meet the parameters of your Executive Order. Therefore, in order to fulfill both the requirements established in your Executive Order and under COMAR, effectively the last day of school scheduled on any school district's 2017–2018 calendar in the state of Maryland must be June 8, 2018. There must be 180 days of instruction, the state's minimum number of days required, scheduled on or before June 8, 2018.

If in Montgomery County we receive no snow, as appears will be the case in the current school year, then that means the last day of school for students would unnecessarily be well before June 15, the final date of school established in your Executive Order. While we do not think you intended for your Executive Order to mandate that the last day of school be June 8, 2018, that is the practical effect of the interaction between your Executive Order and the requirements under COMAR. We respectfully suggest that the unintended consequence of shortening the school year to June 8, 2018, has not been considered in full, and we ask you to reexamine this issue in the coming months and provide districts guidance in how to proceed when developing their school calendars for the 2018–2019 school year.

### Professional Development and Planning Time

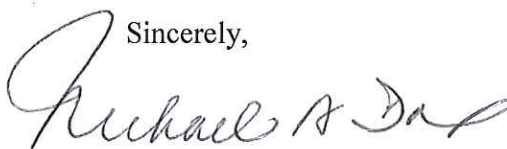
The other unintended consequence from your Executive Order has been that it severely limits the amount of time available for professional development and teacher planning time during the regular workday and student instructional year. Prior to your Executive Order, Montgomery County Public Schools had three full professional days for teachers scheduled on the school calendar, one at the end of each of the first three quarters of the school year. With the need to ensure that the 180th day of school is June 8, 2018, we no longer are able to schedule 3 full professional days, and instead, are scheduling half days in Quarters 1 and 3 and retaining a full professional day in Quarter 2.

We know from a vast body of educational research that ensuring adequate time for professional development and teacher planning leads to better outcomes for students. The compression of the school calendar limits our ability to schedule this much needed professional development and planning time during the regular student calendar year. Therefore, we are requesting you revisit whether it is essential that schools end by June 15 in order to achieve the intent of your Executive Order and the trade-off in the elimination of professional time for teachers that has come with it.

### Future Years

We hope you will consider reexamining the end date of June 15 for the last day of school. As we have shared, ending school by this date has proven problematic for addressing emergency weather-related closings, as well as scheduling critical professional development and planning time for teachers. We urge you to consider alternative approaches in future years to accomplish your objective of maximizing time available for summer vacation while still allowing local jurisdictions to set the structure of the school year according to the operational and educational needs and priorities unique to each district in the state. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these issues further and look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Michael A. Durso  
President

MAD:em

#### Copy to:

Members of the Montgomery County Delegation  
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Mr. Leggett  
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Dr. Salmon  
Members of the Montgomery County Board of Education  
Dr. Smith

Dr. Navarro  
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