

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-7258

AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A FIRM GRADUATION
Title: DATE AND THE DATE FOR THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL SESSIONS.

Vote Date: 3/15/2019

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/6/2019

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

A firm graduation date permits advance planning and securing of venues for major events relating to graduation and travel plans for those who come from afar, allows for students who enter the military to graduate with their class. Seasonal employers presented hardships due to uncertain start dates for their employees and the loss of staff prior to Labor Day due to school starting before the holiday. The tourist economy suffers due to staffing issues with seasonal help.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE-LCO NO. 6131:

School may begin after Labor Day and it permits the graduation date to be no earlier than the 180th day as set forth on the original school calendar, rather than the 180th day of school.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of the Department of Education: Opposed the original raised bill that would mandate school begins after Labor Day. Districts across the state need to have the flexibility to start school when it's best for them based on their community's needs. The Commissioner was amenable to setting a firm graduation date prior to April 1st if the students were required to return to school and complete their work to meet the mandatory 180 days prior to receiving their diplomas.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Representative Tim Ackert, 80th District: Favored a firm graduation date because many graduation events (i.e. Project Graduation) that require extensive planning and expenses are jeopardized and deposits may be forfeited due to changes in the schedule.

CABE: Supports a firm graduation date because there is so much planning that occurs with a graduating senior such as a graduation ceremony location, safe graduation parties and family travel plans.

Several Superintendents who are CAPSS members testified on the benefits of this mandate relief: All strongly support the firm graduation date for planning purposes as it would eliminate the need to book multiple dates and venues due to the uncertainty of the actual date, saves the districts money, doesn't require any state funding, provides mandate relief, allows families to preplan travel arrangements, students can attend freshmen orientation, begin their summer internships or work opportunities on time, permits graduating seniors entering the military post high school the opportunity to graduate with their class. Sarra and Cooke said "there is little to no educational benefit by having the graduating senior in school for a few more days. In fact, allowing them to graduate on the planned 180th day or later, will improve the school atmosphere for high schools and provide an incentive for 12th graders to complete their responsibilities on time":

- Dr. Scott V. Nicol, Ellington Public Schools
- Nancy Sarra, Consolidated School District of New Britain
- Craig Cooke, Ph.D., Windsor Public Schools

Jonathan Duncklee, Gary Upton, Stephanie Marshall and James Verni, Jr., Stanley Mickus , all business owners in a tourist economy and Mary Ellen Jukoski, Ed.D., President, Three Rivers Community College: All strongly support starting school after Labor Day to help keep the businesses staffed through Labor Day, young staff may not be hired in a tourist economy if they can't work through the entire season, seasonal businesses lose employees during the busiest weekend of the summer, seasonal employment allows high school students to earn more money to help offset their families' financial obligations and many schools that started in August of 2018 had extremely warm conditions warranting early dismissals and closings, the owners noted a significant loss of seasonal sales and customers during the month of August because schools start too soon. They have difficulty hiring reliable summer help because high school students stop working prior to Labor Day and athletes stop working even sooner due to camp, tryout and practice requirements. Also, students experience loss of income sooner than necessary because Labor Day weekend is "still a key weekend of the year."

Paige Remmert, a parent: In support of starting school after Labor Day to end the disruptions of the summer, starting school only to have a long weekend and start again interrupts the students focus, it's too hot in school and the schools cancel or dismiss early.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed.

