March 5, 2019

RE: HB7258

Members of the Education Committee,

I am writing this letter on behalf of myself and my husband, James Verni Jr. We own and operate two retail shops in Downtown Mystic, Tidal River Clothing Co., and Trove Men’s Provisions. We are in complete support of HB 7258 An Act Concerning the Establishment of a Firm Graduation Date and the Date for the First Day of School.

We have been business owners in Mystic CT for 17 years, and have noticed that over the last decade or so, our traffic has dwindled during the last two weeks of summer, leading up to Labor Day. August was once our highest sales month of the year. In the last 10 or so years, it has been dwarfed by July. While we are still seeing families from MA and NY, we are without a doubt not seeing families from CT like we used to. With our schools starting back again before Labor Day, end of summer travel has been curtailed, and with it, irreplaceable sales and tax revenue.

We have also found a second, and very problematic, issue with CT schools going back before Labor Day. We are unable to hire mature and responsible area high school students for summer positions, when they need to stop working before the end of August, and are then quite often unavailable Labor Day weekend, as they are now busy with school work. Despite the lower traffic and sales volume, it is still a key weekend of the year. It’s even worse if the student plays a fall sport, as they are required to exit their jobs a week or so earlier for their camps. These students rely on summer employment to help with the cost of saving for college, paying for sports programs, paying for auto payments and insurance and other personal expenses. (Not every teenager in our area is lucky enough to have parents footing the bill for them!!) Summer jobs help our youth to develop a strong work ethic as well as problem solving and communication skills that are crucial to personal development.

Thank you for the chance to speak regarding this proposed bill. I appreciate the consideration that you all are giving to this matter. I hope that you will follow our neighboring states, and move the official start date of school to the first Tuesday after Labor Day.

Best regards,

Stephanie Marshall and James Verni Jr.