



Renee Spence, Executive Director
9 Trotters Ridge Court, Catonsville, MD. 21228
410-925-2183
pssamed@gmail.com

BILL: House Bill 1412
TITLE: Education – Public School Holidays – Veterans’ Day and Easter Monday
DATE: February 28, 2017
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
CONTACT: Renee McGuirk Spence, Executive Director, PSSAM
Email: pssamed@gmail.com; Cell: 410-925-2183

House Bill 1412 repeals the requirement that the Monday after Easter be a public school holiday; requiring Veterans' Day to be a public school holiday; authorizing a county board of education to designate the Monday after Easter as a public school holiday; and providing for a delayed effective date.

PSSAM appreciates the intent of House Bill 1412 to honor veterans who have given so much so that Americans can live and thrive in our great nation. However, PSSAM must respectfully **oppose** this bill.

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 realizes that HB 1412 would swap out mandated school holidays. Easter Monday would no longer be a legislated school holiday, but Veterans’ Day would take its place. Adding another mandated school holiday, although well intended, further complicates the issue of teaching and learning during November. Many school systems are required to close in November for state and national elections and the Thanksgiving holiday is yet another loss of vital instructional time during this month. Many school systems are closed for three days over Thanksgiving to accommodate the needs of educators and the community. In addition, during November, weather conditions can affect school calendars necessitating late openings and/or early closings as well as a full day of closure.

PSSAM believes that honoring veterans can be better accomplished if students are attending school. There are numerous school activities held across the state that honor veterans and instruct students about the sacrifices made

by so many. For example, Middlesex Elementary School in Baltimore County presented a Veterans' Day concert. Comprised of 68 student performers, the chorus performed patriotic songs that honored soldiers and promoted civic pride within the school community. Another example is Montgomery County Public Schools, which promotes Take a Veteran to School Day as a great way to bring history to life in the classroom and help students learn more about Veterans' Day. Take a Veteran to School Day is a national program to link veterans with students. On Veterans' Day, schools and communities invite veterans of all backgrounds to share their stories and receive thanks for their service. These are only two examples of the insightful programs honoring veterans that are happening in our public schools.

For the reasons stated above, PSSAM **opposes** House Bill 1412.