



STATE OF DELAWARE
STATE COUNCIL FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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The Honorable John Carney
Governor

John A. McNeal
Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 24, 2020

TO: All Members of the Delaware State Senate
and House of Representatives

FROM: Mr. J. Todd Webb, Chairperson
State Council for Persons with Disabilities

RE: S.B. 204 (Public School Start After Labor Day)

The State Council for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD) has reviewed S.B. 204 which requires public schools to begin their school year after Labor Day. A majority of members of the School Start Task Force voted to recommend that the State require that each school year start after Labor Day. SCPD has the following observations.

The bill cites several economic studies conducted by nearby states considering similar changes to the school year calendar. While these studies demonstrate potential economic benefit for the State's tourism industry, it is concerning that the bill solely focuses on economic studies and does not cite any study indicating that this change to the calendar has any benefit to students. When considering such a change, economic interests should not dismiss concern over the impact on academics. A highly cited research study on the topic suggests "summer learning loss disproportionately impacts low-income students who may lose as much as two months of reading achievement while out of school for the summer. This is often explained by low-income students not having the same access to quality summer learning opportunities as their wealthier peers. Meanwhile, almost all students lose valuable math skills over the summer."¹

¹ Cooper, H., Nye, B., Charlton, K., Lindsay, J., & Greathouse, S. (1996). The Effects of Summer Vacation on Achievement Test Scores: A Narrative and Meta-Analytic Review. *Review of Educational Research*, 66(3), 227–268. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543066003227>; Dave Reid, "Summer is Coming: Teaching and Learning During the Summer Months." <https://edwp.educ.msu.edu/green-and-write/2015/summer-is-coming-teaching-and-learning-during-the-summer-months/>

SCPD asks for clarification on what research, if any, was considered by the School Start Task Force to determine that this change will positively impact student learning. SCPD also asks if the Task Force thoroughly examined the impact of the proposed legislation on low-income students and students with disabilities in the contexts of the aforementioned “summer learning loss” as well as nutrition and child care.

Thank you for your consideration and please contact SCPD if you have any questions or comments regarding our observations on the proposed legislation.

cc: Ms. Laura Waterland, Esq.
Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens
Developmental Disabilities Council

SB 204 – public school start after labor day 2-24-20