

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2019**

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HOUSE BILL 117

Short Title: School Calendar Flexibility Pilot Program. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Warren, Horn, Howard, and Johnson (Primary Sponsors).
For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

Referred to: Education - K-12, if favorable, Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House

February 21, 2019

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE SCHOOL CALENDAR FLEXIBILITY PILOT PROGRAM.

Whereas, studies show that students in high poverty areas suffer a greater degree of summer learning loss; and

Whereas, any student is prone to have poorer performance on final exams taken after an extended holiday break; and

Whereas, in 2004, the State enacted rigid regulation of school calendar start and end dates; and

Whereas, no factual data supports that later school start dates have a negative effect on North Carolina tourism; and

Whereas, over 122 schools across 31 North Carolina counties currently have year-round school calendars; and

Whereas, many students return to school in late July or early August for athletic training; and

Whereas, many high schools and middle schools have football games and other sports activities during the first weekends in August; and

Whereas, 43 House bills and 15 Senate bills sought to enact school calendar flexibility during the 2017-2018 legislative session, on behalf of 96 local boards of education in 81 counties; and

Whereas, tourism is a significant contributor to the North Carolina economy; and

Whereas, North Carolina consistently ranks as the sixth most visited state in the country; and

Whereas, the State of North Carolina consistently appropriates more than 56% of its biennium budget to education; and

Whereas, the citizens of North Carolina rightfully expect the very best return on their investment in public education, and it is imperative to factually determine what effect, if any, school calendar start dates may have on tourism; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. Purpose. – The State Board of Education (State Board) shall establish a School Calendar Flexibility Pilot Program (Program). The purpose of the Program is to determine the impact of school calendar flexibility for opening and closing dates on student achievement and summer internships and to identify and quantify the communities that can support local school calendar control and those that cannot.

SECTION 2. Participation. – All local school administrative units in the following counties, which collectively represent the geographic, economic, and social diversity of the State,



1 are authorized to participate in the Program: Anson County, Bladen County, Cabarrus County,
2 Caldwell County, Catawba County, Cherokee County, Cleveland County, Davidson County,
3 Davie County, Duplin County, Graham County, Greene County, Guilford County, Martin
4 County, McDowell County, Mitchell County, Northampton County, Robeson County,
5 Transylvania County, Warren County, Washington County, and Wilson County.

6 Any local board of education of a local school administrative unit authorized to
7 participate in the Program may elect not to participate. For each local school administrative unit
8 that elects not to participate in the Program, the State Board may authorize one replacement local
9 school administrative unit to participate in the Program. Together, the local school administrative
10 units participating in the Program shall represent the geographic, economic, and social diversity
11 of the State.

12 **SECTION 3. Implementation.** – Each local school administrative unit participating
13 in the Program shall do so for three school years, beginning in either the 2019-2020 school year
14 or the 2020-2021 school year. The State Board shall provide the Department of Commerce with
15 a list of the participating local school administrative units no later than February 1, 2020.

16 Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-84.2(d), local boards of education of participating local
17 school administrative units shall determine, for the duration of the Program, the dates of opening
18 and closing the public schools under subdivision (a)(1) of G.S. 115C-84.2. Except for year-round
19 schools, the opening date for students shall be no earlier than the Monday closest to August 10
20 and the closing date for students shall be no later than the Friday closest to June 11. A local board
21 may revise the scheduled closing date if necessary in order to comply with the minimum
22 requirements for instructional days or instructional time.

23 The required opening and closing dates under this section shall not apply to any school
24 that a local board designated as having a modified calendar for the 2003-2004 school year or to
25 any school that was part of a planned program in the 2003-2004 school year for a system of
26 modified calendar schools, so long as the school operates under a modified calendar.

27 **SECTION 4. Data Collection by Department of Public Instruction.** – For the duration
28 of the Program, the Department of Public Instruction shall contact each participating local school
29 administrative unit annually to determine (i) the actual dates for opening and closing the public
30 schools, (ii) the impact of the Program on student achievement and summer internships, and (iii)
31 any other information the Department deems necessary for purposes of the study. The
32 Department of Public Instruction shall provide the Department of Commerce with the actual
33 dates for opening and closing the public schools in each participating local school administrative
34 unit.

35 **SECTION 5. Department of Commerce Evaluation.** – The Department of Commerce
36 shall study the effect of the Program on the travel and tourism industry for all 100 counties of the
37 State.

38 **SECTION 6. Reports.** – By November 15 of each year following the operation of
39 the Program, the State Board and the Department of Commerce shall separately report to the
40 School of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on the effects of the
41 Program. The State Board shall report on (i) implementation and administration of the Program;
42 (ii) any impact of the Program on student achievement; (iii) any effect of the Program on summer
43 internships; and (iv) any recommendations on the modification, continuation, and potential
44 expansion of the Program statewide. The State Board shall also recommend any local school
45 administrative units that should be assigned calendar flexibility on an ongoing basis. The
46 Department of Commerce shall report on any economic impact of the Program on the tourism
47 industry in the State. The School of Government shall evaluate this information and provide an
48 aggregated report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by December 15 of
49 the same year.

50 **SECTION 7.** This act is effective when it becomes law.