



HOUSE BILL 117: School Calendar Flexibility Pilot Program.

2019-2020 General Assembly

Committee:	House Education - K-12. If favorable, re-refer to Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House	Date:	March 12, 2019
Introduced by:	Reps. Warren, Horn, Howard, Johnson	Prepared by:	Brian Gwyn*
Analysis of:	First Edition		Staff Attorney

OVERVIEW: *House Bill 117 would establish a School Calendar Flexibility Pilot Program for certain local school administrative units (LEAs) that would allow those LEAs to establish different opening and closing dates than those required in current law.*

CURRENT LAW: Under G.S. 115C-84.2, a school calendar must include a minimum of 185 days or 1025 hours of instruction covering at least nine calendar months. Except for year-round schools, the opening date for students cannot be earlier than the Monday closest to August 26 and the closing date for students cannot be later than the Friday closest to June 11. On a showing of "good cause" the State Board of Education (SBE) may waive the opening date requirement and allow a local board of education to set an opening date no earlier than the Monday closest to August 19. "Good cause" means that schools in any LEA in a county have been closed 8 days per year during any of the 4 of the last 10 years because of severe weather conditions, energy shortages, power failures, or other emergency situations. A local board may revise the scheduled closing date if necessary in order to comply with the minimum requirements for instructional days or time. The required opening and closing dates also do not apply to any school that a local board of education designated as having a modified calendar for the 2003-2004 school year or to any school that was part of a planned program in the 2003-2004 school year for a system of modified calendar schools as long as the school operates under a modified calendar.

BILL ANALYSIS: House Bill 117 would direct the SBE to establish a School Calendar Flexibility Pilot Program (Pilot Program). The purpose of the Pilot Program would be to determine the impact of school calendar flexibility for opening and closing dates on (i) student achievement and summer internships and (ii) to identify and quantify the communities that can support local school calendar control and those that cannot.

Local boards of education of participating LEAs would determine the opening and closing dates for students. The opening dates could be no earlier than the Monday closest to August 10 and the closing date could be no later than the Friday closest to June 11. A local board could revise the scheduled closing date if needed to comply with minimum requirements for instructional days or time.

Participation: The LEAs in the following counties would be authorized to participate in the Pilot Program:

Anson County, Bladen County, Cabarrus County, Caldwell County, Catawba County, Cherokee County, Cleveland County, Davidson County, Davie County, Duplin County, Graham County, Greene County, Guilford County, Martin County, McDowell County, Mitchell County, Northampton County, Robeson County, Transylvania County, Warren County, Washington County, and Wilson County.

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The local board of education of an authorized LEA may elect not to participate in the Pilot Program and the SBE may then authorize one replacement LEA to participate.

Implementation: Each LEA shall participate for 3 school years beginning in either the 2019-2020 school year or the 2020-2021 school year. The SBE must provide the Department of Commerce with a list of the participating LEAs no later than February 1, 2020.

Data Collection by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and Evaluation by the Department of Commerce: DPI must contact each participating LEA each year of the Pilot Program to determine (i) the actual dates for opening and closing the schools; (ii) the impact of the Program on student achievement and summer internships; and (iii) any other information DPI deems needed for the study. The Department of Commerce must study the effect of the Pilot Program on the tourism industry.

Reports: By November 15 of each year following the operation of the Pilot Program, the SBE and the Department of Commerce shall separately report the School of Government (SOG) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on the effects of the Pilot Program.

The SBE must report on the following: (i) implementation and administration of the Pilot Program; (ii) any impact of the Pilot Program on student achievement; (iii) any effect of the Pilot Program on summer internships; and (iv) any recommendations on the modification, continuation, and potential expansion of the Pilot Program statewide. The SBE must also recommend any LEAs that should be given calendar flexibility on an ongoing basis.

The Department of Commerce must report on any economic impact of the Pilot Program on the tourism industry in the State. The SOG must evaluate this information and provide an aggregated report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by December 15 of the same year.

EFFECTIVE DATE: The bill would become effective when it becomes law.

**Drupti Chauhan, Committee Counsel, substantially contributed to this summary.*