



March 6, 2019

RE: HB7258

Members of the Education Committee,

I write on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Chamber of Eastern Connecticut to express support for **HB 7258 An Act Concerning the Establishment of a Firm Graduation Date and the Date for the First Day of School.**

The business of tourism is a significant part of the state’s and region’s economy. It is an industry that many of our high school and college students obtain their first summer jobs for pocket money or in many cases help defray return to school expenses for the family.

Over the past few years we have noticed that more and more school systems have adopted a pre-Labor Day return to school policy which minimizes and, in some cases, eliminates the opportunity for students to work in a tourism-related business on the busiest weekend of the year, Labor Day weekend. In fact, we have heard of some businesses refusing to hire students who cannot commit to working the Labor Day weekend which results in having a detrimental financial and experience impact on the effected students as well as placing unneeded stress on families.

It is for this reason as well as the reasons outlined below that the Chamber supports legislation that requires school districts to begin the school year the day after the Labor Day weekend holiday.

1. **Honoring the true end of the tourist and summer season.** The early school start date prior to Labor Day has a negative impact for businesses engaged in the tourism trade, particularly seasonal businesses. The early end of summer equates to less visitors and ultimately impacts the Labor Day weekend as parents are already in the “back to school” mindset and thus are more reluctant to travel on the holiday weekend.
2. **Drain on the seasonal workforce.** High school students that seek seasonal employment to help with family expenses are directly impacted. The early school start date deprives them of income they would have earned should the school year start post Labor Day. This also directly impacts seasonal businesses that are tourism related, as they lose entry-level and seasonal employees during their busiest weekend of the season.
3. **Public Safety.** Climate change has resulted in June being less summer-like and the end of the season frequently the warmest, resulting in students returning to school in extremely warm conditions. The start of the 2018-19 school year underscored this trend as many schools were forced into early dismissal or cancellations altogether during the last week in August of 2018 because of the heat.
4. **Quality of Life.** Parents traditionally relish the last few days of summer with their children. With a post Labor Day start date, parents can plan that last getaway or day trips during the last week in August when the weather is suitable for such outings. Additionally, starting before Labor Day

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with dismissal in early June is especially challenging for working parents. Most summer camps haven't started and working parents are forced to scramble for costly childcare to bridge the gap until camps are open. A post Labor Day school start date addresses this issue directly.

Finally, it is important to note that other states have either mandated (Virginia, Maryland) or have regulations (New York) that require a post Labor Day start date to the school year for students. Some districts in Connecticut have put it to a vote (East Hampton), while others (Stonington) have been successfully doing it for years to the delight of parents, educators and administrators. For the reasons outlined above we feel it is time for Connecticut to address this important matter by supporting HB 7258.

Respectfully Submitted,



Tony Sheridan
President and CEO

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