

2019 -- H 5878

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2019

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION - SCHOOL COMMITTEES AND SUPERINTENDENTS -  
BEGINNING OF SCHOOL YEAR

Introduced By: Representative Stephen R. Ucci

Date Introduced: March 20, 2019

Referred To: House Health, Education & Welfare

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 16-2-2 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-2 entitled "School  
2 Committees and Superintendents [See Title 16 Chapter 97 - The Rhode Island Board of  
3 Education Act]" is hereby amended to read as follows:

4 **16-2-2. City and town schools required -- School year -- Location -- Kindergartens.**

5 (a)(1) Except as specifically provided in this section, every city or town shall establish  
6 and maintain for at least one hundred eighty (180) days annually or the equivalent thereof,  
7 exclusive of holidays, a sufficient number of schools in convenient places under the control and  
8 management of the school committee and under the supervision of the Rhode Island Board of  
9 Education. In lieu of a convenient location, the school committee may provide transportation for  
10 pupils to and from school in accordance with the provisions of chapter 21 of this title. Provided,  
11 that a school district may establish a school year that is the equivalent of one hundred eighty  
12 (180) days through the use of longer school days in terms of hours or pursuant to subsection (c) of  
13 this section, and that may total less than one hundred eighty (180) separate days, so long as  
14 through the use of the longer school day, the school district annually provides a minimum of one  
15 thousand eighty (1,080) school hours in a single school year. This figure is based on a minimum  
16 of six (6) hours per school day. For purposes of clarification, the intent herein is to permit school  
17 districts to amend their school year to provide for longer school days while reducing the actual  
18 number of days in which the school facilities must be fully staffed and maintained, but to insure

1 that in doing so, school districts shall still provide the minimum amount of instruction time  
2 contemplated by this section. Nothing herein shall be deemed to limit a school district from  
3 exceeding the minimum amounts of days and hours set forth herein.

4 (2) School districts intending to make use of the option provided herein to lengthen  
5 school days and shorten the school year shall submit a detailed school day plan and a proposed  
6 school calendar to the commissioner of elementary and secondary education for approval. The  
7 commissioner shall review the submitted school day plan and the submitted calendar to determine  
8 whether the plan and calendar are academically sound and fiscally efficient. The commissioner  
9 may grant or deny approval of the plan and/or the calendar.

10 (3) Each school district, including charter schools, shall adopt a calendar beginning the  
11 school year on the day after Labor Day, effective for the school year 2020-2021 and thereafter.

12 (b) School facilities shall include a sufficient number of kindergartens.

13 (c) On or before December 1, 2017, the department of elementary and secondary  
14 education shall establish a policy that allows a school district to submit a detailed plan, at any  
15 time, to the commissioner of elementary and secondary education that would allow the schools to  
16 conduct instruction through virtual education when the schools have been closed due to inclement  
17 weather or other emergency. The plan for virtual education would be subject to, and require  
18 approval by, the council on elementary and secondary education in order to count as a school day.

19 (d) Any school that is required by a collective bargaining agreement entered into prior to  
20 the effective date of this section to begin its school year prior to Labor Day shall be exempt from  
21 this section for the duration of such agreement.

22 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION - SCHOOL COMMITTEES AND SUPERINTENDENTS -  
BEGINNING OF SCHOOL YEAR

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- 1           This act would require public schools, including charter schools, to begin the school year
- 2           on the day after Labor Day commencing in the school year 2020-2021.
- 3           This act would take effect upon passage.

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