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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

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House Bill 258
Starting School after Labor Day

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House Tourism & Recreational Development Committee

Irvis Office Building
Room G-50
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Wednesday, May 9, 2007 - 9:30 a.m.

--oOo--

BEFORE:

- Honorable Thomas Tangretti, Majority Chairman
- Honorable Vince Biancucci
- Honorable Ron Buxton
- Honorable Paul Costa
- Honorable Anthony DeLuca
- Honorable Gary Haluska
- Honorable Nick Kotik
- Honorable John Pallone
- Honorable Tony Payton
- Honorable Chris Sainato
- Honorable Steve Samuelson
- Honorable Dante Santoni
- Honorable John Yudichak
- Honorable Jerry Nailor, Minority Chairman
- Honorable Tom Creighton
- Honorable Brian Ellis
- Honorable William Gabig
- Honorable Keith Gillespie
- Honorable Julie Harhart
- Honorable Thomas Killion
- Honorable David Millard
- Honorable Dan Moul
- Honorable John Payne
- Honorable Mario Scavello
- Honorable Curtis Sonney
- Honorable Richard Stevenson

KEY REPORTERS 717.764.7801

1 IN ATTENDANCE:

2 Honorable Robert Godshall

3

4

 ALSO PRESENT:

5

6 Angela Stalnecker
 Majority Executive Director

7

8 Dave Vitale, Esquire
 Majority Counsel for Committee

9

10 Sharon Snell
 Majority Legislative Assistant

11

12 Michael Hillman
 Majority Research Analyst

13

14 Allen Taylor
 Minority Executive Director

15

16 Joann Drabenstadt
 Minority Legislative Assistant

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22

 KEY REPORTERS
 keyreporters@comcast.net

23

24

 1300 Garrison Drive, York, PA 17404
 (717) 764-7801 Fax (717) 764-6367

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38	(Submitted testimony submitted by:	
39		
40	American Camp Assoc. Keystone Regional Section,	
41	PRA)	

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1 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: The hour of
2 9:30 having arrived, the House Tourism and
3 Recreational Development Committee will come to
4 order. We're not sure what's going on with the
5 lights. Nevertheless, we're going to try to
6 proceed.

7 Jerry and I have agreed that we're
8 going to dispense with opening comments given
9 the nature of our time schedule. I'd like the
10 members who are here to identify yourselves.
11 I'm Representative Tangretti from Westmoreland
12 County.

13 REPRESENTATIVE NAILOR:
14 Representative Jerry Nailor, Cumberland County.

15 REPRESENTATIVE KILLION:
16 Representative Tom Killion, Delaware and
17 Chester counties.

18 REPRESENTATIVE SANTONI: I'm
19 Representative Dante Santoni from Bucks County.

20 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON:
21 Representative Steve Samuelson from Lehigh
22 Valley.

23 REPRESENTATIVE PAYNE: Representative
24 John Payne, southern part of Dauphin County.

25 REPRESENTATIVE HALUSKA: Repre-

1 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: As you will see,
2 there will be members who will be moving in and
3 out of the area because of other commitments
4 that they have at other meetings and other
5 hearing, so don't let that disturb anybody.

6 Without further ado, I would ask
7 former Chairman Godshall to take the witness
8 chair and proceed to tell us why 258, which is
9 something he's been working on for a long time,
10 why 258 is something that this committee ought
11 to do. Representative Godshall, thank you very
12 much for agreeing to testify, and thanks for
13 being here. You may proceed.

14 REPRESENTATIVE GODSHALL: Thank you,
15 Mr. Chairman. I'm going to try to make sure I
16 cut this down to about 15, 20 minutes. I have
17 some remarks here on the studies that we've
18 done and things we've done on this bill.

19 I'd just like to open by saying, the
20 school districts are an institution and an
21 integral part of our communities. They have a
22 mission to educate our children, but at the
23 same time they also have responsibilities in
24 the community and to the community.

25 It is not their responsibility to

1 change the social or moral values of a
2 community or to ignore community and family
3 traditions. They are to be part of the
4 community they serve. School districts are not
5 an island onto themselves. They're a part of
6 the community and must act responsibly towards
7 that community.

8 I'd just like to say, when the
9 post -- On Post-Labor Day School Openings,
10 House Bill 258, I had a handout which is a
11 summary of the activities. I'm going to be
12 going over this. House Bill 258 requires
13 school districts to open no earlier than the
14 day after Labor Day. Right now there is no
15 starting date in the school code, and it's up
16 to the school boards. The bill is currently in
17 the House Tourism Committee.

18 I will say on that, as I served
19 17 years on the Souderton School Board, not
20 once did I participate in the calendar. It was
21 handed to us by the superintendent and we
22 immediately okayed it. That was the situation
23 at least in the Souderton School District when
24 I served on the board.

25 This bill does not affect the 180-day

1 education requirement. The bill does not
2 prevent school districts from having in-service
3 days for teachers before Labor Day. Any
4 employee contract that is in conflict with the
5 act would remain in effect for the contract's
6 duration.

7 The bill does not apply to districts
8 that are on a year-round education calendar.
9 The school board may begin the school term
10 earlier than the day after Labor Day for
11 reasons of major construction, renovations to
12 school buildings, a natural disaster, or other
13 approval -- under approval by the State Board
14 of Education.

15 A survey of 1102 Pennsylvania adults
16 was conducted by Mansfield University in 2006.
17 The question was asked simply and to the point:

18 Traditional public schools open after
19 the Labor Day holiday in Pennsylvania.
20 However, some districts are beginning school
21 before the holiday or even in August. Would
22 you favor or oppose legislation to start school
23 after the Labor Day holiday?

24 We went to great length to make sure
25 this wasn't going to be a leading question or

1 it was to the point, you know, schools after
2 Labor Day or not. Traditionally, public
3 schools open after Labor Day.

4 Forty-seven percent of the people
5 said they favor such a law, 26 percent said
6 they oppose; 23 percent said it doesn't matter,
7 and four percent weren't sure. So the people
8 who expressed an opinion, yes or no,
9 64 percent favored later school opening, or the
10 school opening after Labor Day. Broken down by
11 men and women, 52 percent of women said they
12 favored a law. Over 40 percent of men said
13 they favored the law.

14 According to the Mansfield professor
15 who conducted the survey, this question
16 generated more media interest and individual
17 responses than any other question that they did
18 on a survey this past year.

19 Will later school opening dates
20 affect student education? The bill does not
21 affect the 180-day minimum education
22 requirement. Many schools in the state open
23 after Labor Day already and have no trouble
24 maintaining a high quality of education and
25 still ending the school year in early June.

1 The education of Pennsylvania students is still
2 paramount and will not be compromised by this
3 requirement.

4 Should the state be mandating a
5 specific statewide opening?

6 School boards will still have the
7 authority to set their opening date as long as
8 it is not earlier than the day after Labor Day.

9 It should be noted that school
10 districts are a creation of the legislature and
11 are subject to its regulation under Article 3,
12 Section 14 and the Public School Code.

13 The school code already has some
14 school opening restrictions in law. Schools
15 can't operate on Sundays and certain specific
16 holidays, like Memorial Day, July 4th,
17 Christmas, Thanksgiving, New Year's Day, and so
18 forth.

19 Is there an economic impact from
20 starting school before Labor Day? Yes, a major
21 one.

22 An economic study released 9/27/06,
23 by the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
24 and conducted by research firm TrippUmbach
25 showing as starting -- from Pittsburgh showed

1 that starting schools before Labor Day:

2 Has a 378 million-dollar negative
3 economic impact on the state, including the
4 loss of 164 million in direct dollars;

5 Costs 2,348 jobs;

6 Loses \$17.7 million in state tax
7 revenue for the state; tax revenue, by the way,
8 that could go to the stores;

9 Loses teachers and students
10 \$45.6 million in the inability to work a summer
11 job during the last week of August;

12 Costs parents 4.6 million in child
13 care expenses for every vacation day added to
14 the school calendar.

15 The contractor that conducted the
16 study found that schools could begin classes
17 after Labor Day with no impact at all on the
18 amount of instructional time used for
19 education, by the way, by expanding the school
20 day by eight minutes, reducing the number of
21 teacher in-service days, or even snow make-up
22 days.

23 Is there a social impact from
24 starting before Labor Day?

25 Many families complain that opening

1 schools before the traditional end-of-summer
2 holiday negatively affects family vacations.
3 There have been reports of substantial
4 absenteeism in some schools that start early
5 due to scheduled family activities, vacations
6 on the week before the holiday and, really,
7 work schedules.

8 I have probably 2,000 letters in my
9 file on this bill from families who said
10 exactly that. If we had any family
11 get-togethers at all, it was -- The week we
12 could get together was the Labor Day weekend,
13 which was the end of summer, including my own
14 family, which comes from Alanta, from Arizona,
15 from California. The Labor Day weekend was a
16 weekend we could all get together. That is not
17 the case in many districts.

18 Representative John Pallone, by the
19 way, when he was up in Erie last year at an
20 educational committee meeting talked to an
21 attendance officer from one of the Erie school
22 districts. They said they had 25 to 33 percent
23 absenteeism that last week, starting those
24 couple days in September.

25 Ending the summer vacation early and

1 then having more nonholiday days off throughout
2 the school year also forces parents to take off
3 work or find child care for those days off,
4 which may not be the holidays in their
5 workplace.

6 Jobs are affected. Students who work
7 to get money for college or living expenses
8 have to go back before summer is over and miss
9 out on the pay. And some students are
10 financially disadvantaged by early school
11 openings since they may not have access to
12 those jobs in which they have to commit to
13 working through the Labor Day weekend, or they
14 may not be able to get any bonuses available
15 for working the holiday weekend.

16 Businesses in the community that
17 employ younger workers, such as the tourism and
18 hospitality industries, also suffer from early
19 school openings since they lose their workers
20 during what normally is their busiest week of
21 the summer. Labor Day weekend is the biggest
22 travel weekend we have in the State of
23 Pennsylvania. In many cases the businesses
24 provide the only job opportunities for these
25 students that work in the districts; the only

1 job opportunities they have.

2 Would opening after Labor Day push
3 school closing dates later?

4 It shouldn't have to. Research of
5 calendars of school districts in Montgomery and
6 Dauphin counties showed that they had a number
7 of days off during the school year,
8 nonholidays, that could be used. These
9 districts had from -- for every nine to 12 days
10 of school for every nonholiday day off. After
11 nine to 12 days of school, there was a
12 nonholiday off, which is Saturday, Sunday or
13 nonholidays.

14 And some of the districts that
15 started after Labor Day actually closed on the
16 same date or earlier than one district that
17 started before Labor Day. And this was in the
18 survey that we did.

19 Would Pennsylvania be the only state
20 with such a law? Virginia, Minnesota and
21 Michigan have laws on the books already. The
22 issue was debated in Texas in 2005 and polled
23 very favorably among citizens there. Wisconsin
24 and North Carolina have a September 1st
25 minimum.

1 In 2004, the Texas comptroller issued
2 a report saying that early school opening costs
3 Texas \$790 million every year in economic
4 activity. The report also estimates that
5 extending the summer break can generate
6 \$28 million per day for tourist destinations
7 for the state.

8 The comptroller report also points
9 out that Texas schools today appear to offer
10 substantially the same number of instructional
11 days as in 1949; yet, offer substantially
12 shorter summer breaks.

13 In Montgomery County, by the way, by
14 a vote of 280 to 14, a poll of teachers in one
15 of our school districts showed overwhelming
16 support for starting school for students after
17 Labor Day.

18 Senator James Rhoades, Chairman of
19 the Senate Education Committee, stated at the
20 2006 Tourism Industry Legislative Day that he
21 would support moving Post-Labor Day starting
22 legislation if and when it comes to the Senate.

23 At this time I'd just like to go over
24 this other handout which I had from the
25 Legislative Budget and Finance Committee, a

1 report that we did last year. In this report,
2 which was TrippUmbach, had an economic
3 impact -- an economic impact research firm
4 based in Pittsburgh, they were hired to conduct
5 the study. Their conclusion was, the number of
6 school days has remained unchanged nationally
7 for more than 50 years.

8 However, the length of summer
9 vacation has been shortened as school districts
10 throughout the Commonwealth have additional
11 teacher in-service days, snow days, student
12 vacation days, grade card preparation days, and
13 so forth.

14 Large numbers of school districts
15 began school schedule changes in the late '70's
16 following a spate of severe winters that
17 disrupted the academic schedule. Currently,
18 88 percent of all Pennsylvania districts start
19 after Labor Day. Or begin before Labor Day,
20 I'm sorry.

21 While adding days to the school
22 calendar and starting school before Labor Day
23 appears on the surface to be squarely an
24 educational issue, it has dramatic negative
25 impacts on economic development and employment,

1 costing the Pennsylvania economy over
2 \$378 million annually.

3 Recognizing the economic realities of
4 taking tens of thousands of tourists out of the
5 game in late August, states such as Michigan,
6 Virginia and Wisconsin, now require that
7 schools open for operation after Labor Day.
8 However, these states do offer a waiver process
9 for the school districts in order to circumvent
10 this law in case of a construction project or
11 some relevant need.

12 Another state, Texas, introduced a
13 bill that would require the schools to begin
14 the fourth Monday -- on or after the fourth
15 Monday in August. This bill was signed into
16 law on May 31st, 2006. The benefits of having
17 schools all begin on the same day is not only
18 one that financially assists the state, but it
19 also evens the playing field for the students
20 who participate in standardized testing at the
21 same time.

22 In addition, this assists the state
23 with getting the adequate yearly progress
24 reports distributed prior to the start of the
25 school year which keeps the school in good

1 standing with the USDE Title I appropriations
2 and in line with PL 107-110--Don't ask me what
3 that is because I don't know--which is also
4 known as No Child Left Behind. That's, I
5 guess, what explains the thing.

6 Second page. I'm not going to read
7 all of this. I'm just going to go over some
8 high points.

9 A growing coalition of
10 representatives from the state's tourism
11 industry, along with economic development
12 agencies, have formed to promote the economic
13 benefits of preserving the traditional summer
14 vacation. Certainly, late August travel is an
15 important component in the state's
16 34-billion-dollar tourism industry, especially
17 since Pennsylvania families are more likely to
18 make their in-state vacations in late summer.

19 Organizations such as the
20 Pennsylvania Tourism and Lodging Association,
21 Pennsylvania Amusement Parks Association,
22 Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs,
23 and the Pennsylvania Campground Owners
24 Association are all in favor of the effort to
25 restore the traditional summer vacation.

1 Pennsylvania is not unlike other
2 states in researching the estimated cost of
3 starting school prior to Labor Day. Texas,
4 prior to the law, which I went over before,
5 mentioned that it cost them \$790 million. Each
6 extra holiday, by the way, they also found in
7 Texas that is added to the calendar, for Texas
8 schools costs an additional \$67.8 million per
9 day statewide. These direct impact numbers do
10 not take into account all of the indirect
11 spending as a result of the additional money in
12 the Texas economy, as well as the induced
13 impacts that would be involved.

14 Additionally, Michigan had analysis
15 compared (sic) by Donald Holecek, editor-in-
16 chief of the Michigan Tourism Business.
17 Professor Holecek is a professor at Michigan
18 State University, as well as the director of
19 the Travel, Tourism and Recreation Resource
20 Center at Michigan State University. He was
21 asked to show how much tax revenue would be
22 generated by the adoption of legislation that
23 requires K-12 public schools to open after
24 Labor Day.

25 His analysis showed that the benefit

1 to Michigan was abundant. This would come in
2 the form of tax revenue increases estimated at
3 four million conservatively. The four million
4 was a direct result of the 70 million estimated
5 to be the additional direct travel spending
6 that would result from additional travel time
7 allowed by a delayed school start date. This
8 direct spending would create a total impact of
9 over \$100 million on the state's economy,
10 similar to what we have in Texas and
11 Pennsylvania.

12 He also noted, beyond the economic
13 benefits, the additional gain in the long-term
14 benefits for businesses in Michigan assist the
15 whole state economy. He stated that additional
16 profits that Michigan businesses would see as a
17 result of the legislation will cause them to
18 enhance and expand the products that they were
19 offering. This would, therefore, improve the
20 tourism industry, provide more jobs, causing
21 more attractions and increasing the tourism
22 dollars on a year-round basis.

23 TrippUmbach's secondary research
24 incorporates a study of Pennsylvania voters
25 which was conducted by telephone in

1 February '06 by Mansfield University. The
2 Mansfield's study -- And this, as I said, was
3 1100 and some Pennsylvanians that participated
4 in the study. Most of the polls that you see
5 pertaining to Pennsylvania are about three or
6 400 Pennsylvanians, and this is over 1100.

7 The Mansfield study found that of
8 those expressing an opinion, 64 percent favored
9 starting school after Labor Day, and these were
10 parents with kids in school. This data is in
11 line with data gathered from other states, and
12 particularly in Alabama, Texas, and so forth.

13 So at this point what I'd like to do
14 is, there was an article just recently in a
15 Lancaster newspaper which said, according to
16 the research by TrippUmbach study consultants
17 of Pittsburgh, the figure in Pennsylvania lost
18 to the state is about
19 17.7 million in lost state tax revenue.

20 And it says: Local tourism officials
21 also point out that a uniform September startup
22 would snip from the calendar one of the most
23 expensive school cooling months of the year.
24 In fact, August days --

25 Al Taylor and I, we checked with the

1 weather bureau when we got some letters on this
2 issue. The end of August we're looking at four
3 to five degrees warmer temperatures than we are
4 in the first to the middle of June. This is
5 what they're talking about in Texas also.

6 In fact, shortening summer
7 especially strains the tourism industry, which
8 in Lancaster County employs 29,000 people and
9 brings in more than \$1.2 billion a year. When
10 student workers quit before summer does, says
11 Steven S. Bear, president and chief executive
12 officer of the Pennsylvania Convention and
13 Visitor Bureau, it's a major labor burden, and
14 it's draining.

15 At this point, again, I have
16 another -- I did mention that we did do a study
17 starting school after Labor Day by geographic
18 region around the state. And just to let you
19 know what this showed, in the northwest
20 46.2 percent -- Now, remember, there's about
21 25 to 30 percent that said they had no opinion.

22 In the northwest 46.2 percent said
23 they favored schools starting after Labor Day,
24 with 21 percent saying they opposed it. In the
25 southwest it was 45 percent that said they

1 favored it, with 29 percent opposing it. In
2 the northeast, 45 percent favored, with
3 30 percent opposing it. And in the southeast,
4 which, when I copied this I cut this off, in
5 the southeast it was about the same. It was
6 about 48 percent, with about 25 percent
7 opposing it.

8 And in the central part of the state
9 where we're in right here, was the biggest of
10 all. We had 52 percent in the central part of
11 the state favoring starting schools after Labor
12 Day, with only 20 percent opposing it. So it
13 was about 50 percent to 20 percent in the
14 central part of the state.

15 In my own school district, which I
16 have the calendar for, we're starting after
17 Labor Day, we're closing on June the 13th, and
18 that is in spite of the whole week of
19 Thanksgiving off. It's in spite of having
20 eight or nine days for Christmas and New Year's
21 vacation. School districts at this point, at
22 least down our way, are not starting the day
23 after New Year's. They're starting two days
24 after New Year's, I guess to get over
25 hangovers, or something, I really don't know.

1 And then we have a spring holiday
2 coming in. That was being facetious, by the
3 way. I'm not charging anybody. And then we
4 have spring holidays coming in, which was from
5 April 5th to 9 -- 5 to 9, and we're still
6 closing schools on June 13th.

7 So that, Mr. Chairman, sort of is
8 background and sort of things that we've
9 developed over the last two years as to really
10 what the people of Pennsylvania feel about this
11 bill, how they feel, and the work that we've
12 done in the committee.

13 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Thank you very
14 much, Chairman Godshall.

15 REPRESENTATIVE GODSHALL: And I'm
16 ahead of schedule.

17 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: You're a man of
18 your word. You left 10 minutes for questions.

19 There were a number of members who
20 arrived while you were testifying:
21 Representative Scavello, Representative Ellis,
22 Representative Harhart, Representative Millard,
23 Representative Payton. Did I did miss anybody?
24 Also Samuelson. I apologize, you're so quiet.

25 Also I failed to introduce Angela

1 Stalnecker, the Executive Director of the
2 Majority side and Al Taylor, of course, the
3 Minority Director for Jerry.

4 Bob, I guess I -- I mean, the bottom
5 line is, based on all the data that you have
6 just recited and developed over the number of
7 years, the lack of those two or three days in
8 August that would normally be school days could
9 be moved forward past Labor Day without any
10 loss of academic instructional days, and
11 essentially be able to conclude their school
12 district essentially -- school district time
13 frame and the needed days under the state code
14 essentially in the same time frame that they do
15 now, even if they started before Labor Day.

16 REPRESENTATIVE GODSHALL: When we did
17 that survey, which we took some of the
18 Montgomery County schools and a couple in
19 Dauphin County, and as Al Taylor has eight of
20 the districts -- I'm not going to name them
21 here. We have one district that for every nine
22 days of school there was a nonholiday or a
23 Saturday or Sunday off built into the calendar
24 for one reason or another.

25 And there's no question that I don't

1 think any of us ever went to school when we had
2 the whole week of Thanksgiving off. There's
3 not one industry in the state that says that
4 you have to -- I don't know of anybody that
5 worked out in the -- I was going to say in the
6 real world, I shouldn't say that, that really
7 had a day or two before Christmas off and then
8 all the way to two days after. That's a
9 tradition also. You know, I'm not asking to
10 break that. But there's enough in there with
11 spring breaks and with all the other breaks
12 that we have.

13 Every time when we're lengthening the
14 school year, we're not lengthening the
15 education days, but we're lengthening the
16 school year. And for all those extra vacation
17 days that are built in there, there's -- And
18 this poll was done with people who had kids in
19 school, and they have to find -- Mothers have
20 to find and parents have to find baby-sitters
21 and help during that -- to fill in those days,
22 and it's difficult.

23 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Members of the
24 committee, questions? Representative Costa.

25 REPRESENTATIVE COSTA: Thank you, Mr.

1 Chairman.

2 When I continually ask my
3 superintendents I keep getting the same
4 response. It doesn't matter when you start
5 school you still have -- In August you still
6 have soccer camps, band camps, football camps
7 and it still takes a lot of the students. How
8 do you respond to that, because I don't have an
9 answer for them either?

10 REPRESENTATIVE GODSHALL: I'm not
11 sure what that has to do with the school days,
12 Paul.

13 REPRESENTATIVE COSTA: The
14 argument -- And I agree with you, Mr. Chairman.
15 I'm a co-sponsor of the bill. I agree with you
16 this has a major economic impact. But their
17 argument is, where the majority of the kids
18 that are participating in the school are
19 participating in soccer, girls and boys,
20 football, band camp and all these other things,
21 so they have to cut their vacation short
22 anyway. How do we reply to them or respond to
23 them?

24 REPRESENTATIVE GODSHALL: I think
25 most of those camps -- First of all, it would

1 put everybody on a level-playing field by
2 starting after Labor Day. And I think they
3 can't start those -- We have some maybe more
4 astute school board members than I am here
5 today, but I think they can't start a lot of
6 those practices until so many days prior to the
7 start of school, if it's an official function
8 at least of the school. So this would put
9 everybody on the same playing field.

10 It would, again, I guess -- Down in
11 the southeast, my school, we're as active in
12 everything from water polo to ice hockey, to
13 just pretty well around the world, that they
14 have activities and we're starting after Labor
15 Day with no problem at all.

16 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Representative
17 Ellis.

18 REPRESENTATIVE ELLIS: Thank you, Mr.
19 Chairman.

20 Mr. Chairman, thanks for testifying
21 today. I had a question. You had talked in
22 your testimony a bunch about nonholiday days.

23 REPRESENTATIVE GODSHALL: Right.

24 REPRESENTATIVE ELLIS: Do you have
25 the numbers of what the average school district

1 has as far as nonholiday days per year?

2 REPRESENTATIVE GODSHALL: No, I
3 don't. When Al Taylor and I, your executive
4 director on the Republican side, when we were
5 questioned on that last year, we did a survey
6 of a number of school districts. I don't know
7 if it was between five and 10. That's when we
8 found that between the five and 10 that we did
9 one school -- in one case it was about 12 days
10 and then you had a nonholiday, you know, day
11 off, and in one case it was about nine days.
12 The average was about nine to 10 I think. For
13 every 10 days of school you have a nonholiday,
14 Saturday or Sunday off.

15 REPRESENTATIVE ELLIS: Okay. So let's
16 assume that maybe that applies to the entire
17 state.

18 REPRESENTATIVE GODSHALL: It probably
19 would.

20 REPRESENTATIVE ELLIS: Probably. What
21 are those days typically being used for now?
22 And if there are certain things that the
23 teachers are doing, when can they do it
24 instead?

25 REPRESENTATIVE GODSHALL: They can do

1 it -- If it's teacher days, it's not during the
2 spring break, or that's not during the other
3 holidays that I went through. My own school
4 board, using it as an example, I mentioned all
5 the days that they had off for spring break,
6 Christmas, New Year, and so forth, and the
7 Thanksgiving vacation, that can all be done
8 prior to the school year. A lot of that
9 teacher preparation could be done prior to the
10 school year. There's nothing in the bill that
11 says they can't do that.

12 REPRESENTATIVE ELLIS: Thank you, Mr.
13 Chairman.

14 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Chairman Nailor.

15 REPRESENTATIVE NAILOR: Thank you,
16 Mr. Chairman.

17 Bob, just one follow-up here on
18 something you said a bit ago about creating a
19 level playing level field and everybody
20 starting after Labor Day. In your bill, is
21 there anything in your bill or is the intent of
22 your bill to include nonpublic schools,
23 students that attend there and also work in the
24 industry, or is this just for public schools?

25 REPRESENTATIVE GODSHALL: This is

1 only public schools because we don't regulate
2 the nonpublic schools to any great degree.
3 Again, in my area, and as I said, I serve on
4 the school board, the nonpublic schools try to
5 work with us pretty well in working with us
6 together to try to formulate their calendars
7 with our calendars because of the busing. As
8 you well know, we have to bus students to
9 nonpublic schools for 10 miles. So, there's
10 nothing that we can do on the private, but the
11 private schools did work with us back home when
12 I was on the board.

13 REPRESENTATIVE NAILOR: Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Representative
15 Samuelson.

16 REPRESENTATIVE GODSHALL: This will
17 be a tough one.

18 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: No, I've
19 soften them up.

20 REPRESENTATIVE GODSHALL: Okay.

21 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: Well,
22 thank you. It's a question I'm sure you have
23 received before from superintendents. The
24 concern that they've expressed to me is about
25 high-stakes testing. And if this bill would

1 pass and we have one less week in August and
2 maybe one more week in June, but if the date of
3 the PSSA test would stay on the same day in
4 March, the concern they've expressed is,
5 wouldn't you be taking away a week of
6 instruction before the high-stakes test?

7 Now, my question would be, have you
8 had any discussions with the Department of
9 Education maybe about moving that date of the
10 test back to the end of March or into April?
11 And it's actually seven days of test. My son
12 had seven days of tests for the PSSA.

13 REPRESENTATIVE GODSHALL: The PSSA
14 back home was February -- for 5, 8 and 11 in my
15 district, which I have their calendar, was
16 February 12 -- Writing PSSA for 5, 8 and 10 was
17 between the 12th and the 23rd of February, and
18 then the reading was in March 12 to 16 and 19
19 to 23. We have a spring holiday in there. We
20 have a spring vacation in there also.

21 There would probably be no problem in
22 moving that -- maybe that spring testing
23 further front to, you know, earlier in March.
24 But I guess I'm not sure why we have a spring
25 holiday in here for, you know, that we also

1 need that.

2 The answer is, I have talked to
3 numerous superintendents. I have two school
4 districts in my district, North Penn and
5 Souderton. Both of them start after Labor Day.
6 Both of them did start before Labor Day, found
7 it was no educational value to the kids. In
8 most cases -- In some cases it was even only
9 half a day for two days in September, and then
10 all of a sudden you had Saturday, Sunday and
11 Monday off, and then you came back Tuesday or
12 Wednesday and had two half days in August.

13 There can be adjustments made,
14 Representative, with no problem at all I would
15 think moving those days earlier. And if that
16 is a real factor, then why are we having in
17 early February the PSSA for writing and we have
18 nine, 10 or 11 days off four weeks before
19 Christmas vacation? If that's a great concern,
20 maybe we should have a little bit of concern
21 there. But, we don't seem to have it in March.

22 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: My
23 understanding is that the Department of
24 Education prescribes a certain window for when
25 the tests can be administered. So my suggest

1 would be, could we have some discussions with
2 the Department of Education about moving that
3 window back later in the spring?

4 REPRESENTATIVE GODSHALL: I'm sure
5 that -- with your chairman would be
6 absolutely -- would be -- welcome that and
7 would do that. I'm not speaking for the
8 chairman.

9 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: No, I would
10 agree.

11 REPRESENTATIVE GODSHALL: But he's
12 shaking his head, so --

13 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: As we go forward
14 with this that would obviously be part of the
15 discussion. Last question, Representative
16 Sainato.

17 REPRESENTATIVE SAINATO: Thank you,
18 Mr. Chairman.

19 Chairman Godshall, when you did the
20 research and the study on this issue, what is
21 the average number of school districts, and how
22 many days did they start before Labor Day? Was
23 it two, three, four?

24 REPRESENTATIVE GODSHALL: Essentially
25 it was two days before Labor Day, and it was

1 the last -- then it was the first -- two days,
2 Thursday -- some Wednesday, Thursday and
3 Friday. Mostly it was two days we found. And
4 in some cases there was only -- in those cases
5 it was only a half a day, you know, for each of
6 those days.

7 REPRESENTATIVE SAINATO: So we don't
8 know how many -- You would have that -- I'll
9 check with Al. But I'm saying when we're
10 looking at it -- So you're saying the average
11 was two days that we have to find --

12 REPRESENTATIVE GODSHALL: Yes, the
13 ones we looked at.

14 REPRESENTATIVE SAINATO: All right.
15 Thank you, Chairman Godshall. Thank you,
16 Chairman Tangretti.

17 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Chairman
18 Godshall, thank you so much for taking the time
19 out to testify. And you're welcome to join us
20 on the dais for the rest of the testimony if
21 you have the time. We certainly would
22 appreciate that. If you have other pressing
23 business, we understand that as well. Thank
24 you.

25 REPRESENTATIVE GODSHALL: I

1 the incoming president and officer of the
2 Pennsylvania Association of Convention and
3 Visitor Bureaus, I'm appreciative of the
4 opportunity to speak to you today with regards
5 to House Bill 258, which deals with Post-Labor
6 Day school initiative.

7 My current employment is twofold, in
8 that, I am the Executive Director of the
9 Lycoming County Visitors Bureau and also the
10 Executive Vice-President of the Williamsport/
11 Lycoming Chamber of Commerce. Our organization
12 represents nearly 1,000 businesses in Lycoming
13 County.

14 For the purpose of today's
15 presentation I will also point out to you a
16 personal aspect of my life, with regards to my
17 wife and I, we are the involved parents of
18 three great kids, with my oldest being a first
19 grader at Sheridan Elementary School in
20 Williamsport.

21 This morning you're going to hear
22 from people that will be sharing with you both
23 the pros and cons of this issue. Let it be
24 understood that from the beginning, all of us
25 on both sides of this issue have a vested

1 interest in seeing that quality education is
2 provided to the children of Pennsylvania. It's
3 just that we each have a different perspective
4 in how this should be delivered.

5 There are three areas of this issue
6 that I'd like to share information with you in
7 helping to provide the committee with a better
8 understanding. The first is the local impact
9 that this would have to the school district
10 budgets. The second is the impact that this
11 would have to the state with regards to
12 business revenue and taxes. And finally, I
13 will give you a personal but professional
14 perspective on how this impacts one of
15 Pennsylvania's signature events, the Little
16 League World Series.

17 In looking at the local impact,
18 taxpayers across the Commonwealth are hearing
19 about how the costs are continuing to rise in
20 terms of operating their home school districts.
21 Factors driving these costs increases include
22 administrative costs such as health insurance
23 and salaries along with institutional costs
24 such as heating, air conditioning, electric and
25 busing. These institutional costs are driven

1 by outside factors such as rising oil prices.

2 Our local Williamsport Sun-Gazette
3 had an article in the paper last week that
4 reported about the Williamsport Area School
5 District, in that, they were looking at ways to
6 cut costs as they relate to energy consumption.
7 Williamsport is very similar to other schools
8 across the Commonwealth, in that, they are
9 looking at ways to cut costs to keep school
10 taxes in line with the local citizens' ability
11 to pay them.

12 One option for these schools is to
13 look at how they structure their school days.
14 School districts in states where Post-Labor Day
15 school starts have been implemented have
16 experienced significant savings in their
17 operational costs. One Michigan school
18 district, in particular, experienced an annual
19 savings of over \$400,000 directly related to
20 the later opening of the schools.

21 The district adjusted the length of
22 their school day, which required them to bus
23 the students less, keep the lights on fewer
24 days, and run their air conditioners fewer
25 days. Their adjustment amounted to adding

1 approximately 12 minutes to the school day.

2 This is just one option, though, for
3 school boards and administrators to consider
4 when they develop their school calendars. And
5 yes, I do appreciate they have a negotiated
6 contract with the teachers that impacts this as
7 well. However, administrators can be
8 questioned about why they do not look at
9 incorporating teacher in-service days at points
10 other than they do now. They also could
11 consider moving back parent-teacher conferences
12 to the evenings.

13 These are just two examples of ways
14 that the schools could partner with the private
15 sector to address this issue. While some
16 administrators and school board representatives
17 try to paint our industry as being greedy and
18 only concerned about ourselves, they too should
19 look at themselves as to how their choices
20 impact their entire communities.

21 This change in how we view the school
22 year would not only impact us just locally, but
23 statewide as well. Having a standard school
24 start date would enable the tourism industry to
25 increase its contribution to the bottom line of

1 the Commonwealth as well.

2 As it stands now, a recent study,
3 which was already cited before, by TrippUmbach,
4 an economic impact research firm from
5 Pittsburgh showed that the loss of tax revenue
6 to the state was estimated to be \$17.7 million.
7 This tax revenue for just one week represents
8 more than the combined total amount of state
9 monies put towards the annual marketing for
10 tourist promotion agencies through the Regional
11 Marketing Initiative Program and Matching Fund
12 Program combined.

13 As the second largest industry in
14 Pennsylvania, we're just asking for our
15 opportunity to truly demonstrate the
16 legislature's investment in tourism by being
17 able to have back what was traditionally the
18 last family vacation week of the summer season.

19 Finally, I'd like to end my comments
20 here today with a local example of how this
21 impacts one of Pennsylvania's signature events
22 and icons, the annual Little League World
23 Series held from mid to late August each year.
24 A study done two years ago placed the estimated
25 impact of the Little League World Series to the

1 local economy for those 10 days at over
2 \$16 million. This is just those 10 days and
3 confined to the Lycoming County community.

4 Those who have watched the World
5 Series on ESPN or ABC have seen the coverage
6 grow to where it is one of the highest rated
7 shows on ESPN. This past year they signed a
8 multi-year contract with ABC and ESPN that will
9 grow their coverage to have each game televised
10 that is played during those 10 days in south
11 Williamsport. The contract will go through
12 their 75th anniversary in 2014.

13 Couple the fact that you have this
14 type of media coverage converging on south
15 Williamsport with the fact that last year
16 participation in Little League Baseball grew,
17 while many other youth sports were either flat
18 or showed a decline, you would probably think
19 that we have a hard time keeping people away
20 from this free, family-oriented international
21 sporting events.

22 Well yes, you guessed, that's not the
23 case. Attendance at the Sunday final
24 championship game has dropped over the years
25 since its high of over 40,000 that was achieved

1 on a number of occasions in the late '90's and
2 early 2000's.

3 One of the primary reasons that we
4 attribute this to is that, when the parents
5 look at the day of the game and the fact that
6 the very next day is the start of school for
7 many of the children in both Pennsylvania and
8 38 other states, most choose to watch it from
9 home. Now, last year was not a good year for
10 the championship game due to the heavy rains
11 that caused its postponement to Monday.
12 However, the year prior, in 2005, the
13 championship game struggled to get over
14 30,000 attendees.

15 I personally have been asked to get
16 stadium seating tickets for people, only to
17 have them decline them because of the fact that
18 when they found out that the date of the game
19 was that last Sunday before the Labor Day
20 holiday weekend, they told us they couldn't go
21 because they had to take their kids or their
22 nieces or nephews back to school.

23 It's time we take a look at this
24 opportunity to give both families and the
25 business community their full summers back. We

1 ask that you support our efforts to advance
2 House Bill 258.

3 On behalf of the Pennsylvania
4 Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus,
5 the Lycoming County Visitors Bureau and the
6 Williamsport/Lycoming Chamber of Commerce and
7 those businesses that we represent, I thank you
8 for this time to present.

9 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Thank you, Mr.
10 Fink.

11 MR. OLIVER: Good morning. My name
12 is John Oliver, and I'm president of the Erie
13 Area Convention and Visitors Bureau. It's our
14 mission as the marketing leader of the
15 hospitality industry in Erie to promote our
16 region as a tourism, convention, leisure and
17 business destination for the economic benefit
18 of the community.

19 With this mission in mind, the Erie
20 Area Convention and Visitors Bureau Board of
21 Directors has adopted a resolution supportive
22 of the legislation before you today that would
23 establish a Post-Labor Day school opening of
24 all elementary and secondary schools throughout
25 the Commonwealth.

1 With schools in Pennsylvania opening
2 prior to Labor Day, the number of potential
3 visitors traveling to Erie decreases
4 significantly, costing Erie and the State of
5 Pennsylvania a substantial loss in visitor
6 spending.

7 Additionally, the increased number of
8 high school students returning to school prior
9 to Labor Day causes difficulty for Erie's
10 tourism industry to adequately staff their
11 businesses and maintain operations.

12 Allow me to give you an example of
13 this. Two of our summer attractions, and
14 arguably, two of the largest draws, are forced
15 to close the week before Labor Day or curtail
16 their operations. Waldameer Park and Water
17 World is forced to close the week prior to
18 Labor Day due to a shortage of staff and a
19 decreased number of visitors.

20 Presque Isle State Park, the highest
21 visited state park in the entire system with
22 nearly four million visitors each year, of
23 which over a million are from outside the
24 region, is unable to staff all of the swimming
25 areas available and also experiences a drop in

1 visitation that week.

2 This is a problem that is faced not
3 by Erie alone, but by every other destination
4 in Pennsylvania. The economic impact of
5 pre-Labor Day school openings to Pennsylvania
6 is tremendous.

7 The recent report by an independent
8 research company, TrippUmbach, shows that the
9 state economy loses \$378 million a year.
10 Losing that money, in turn, costs the state
11 more than 2,348 equivalent jobs annually. It
12 also means the loss of \$17.7 million in tax
13 revenues. These lost revenues, if given to the
14 school districts, would allow them to offer
15 increased tutoring opportunities to assist our
16 students with the federally-mandated annual
17 standardization tests.

18 The Erie Area Convention and Visitors
19 Bureau feels that this change can be
20 accomplished by school districts without
21 jeopardizing the already high quality of
22 education provided to the youth of
23 Pennsylvania. We feel that the additional time
24 allowing families to travel will enhance their
25 quality of life, and thus, the overall

1 education of our children.

2 There have been a number of ways that
3 have been offered to school districts that
4 would allow them to begin the school year
5 Post-Labor Day and not impact the number of
6 mandated teaching days.

7 As every area of the state has
8 struggled over the last 25 years with a
9 shifting economy, tourism has been a shining
10 beacon of strength and growth. In Erie, nearly
11 \$500,000 million has been invested over the
12 last six years by both government and the
13 private sector in tourism-related projects.

14 Investments of this magnitude clearly
15 show that tourism is becoming a major economic
16 generator in our community. As the second
17 largest industry in Pennsylvania, we need to
18 continue to find ways to keep it healthy and
19 expanding. We need to remember that tourism in
20 Pennsylvania is a product that cannot be moved
21 to another part of the country or world. But,
22 it is also a product we need to continue to
23 find ways to maximize its consumption in the
24 state.

25 In closing, I would urge you to move

1 House Bill Number 258 to the floor of the House
2 to be voted on. I would like to emphasize the
3 hospitality industry in Erie would in no way
4 want to impede the educational opportunities
5 for our children, but feel that working
6 collaboratively with the schools, we can both
7 strengthen an important industry in this state
8 and provide an education that strives to make
9 our children globally competitive.

10 Thank you for giving me the
11 opportunity to speak to you today.

12 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Thank you, Mr.
13 Oliver.

14 MR. QUINN: Good morning,
15 Representatives. My name is Andy Quinn. I'm
16 the director of community relations for the
17 Kennywood Entertainment Corporation, which owns
18 and operates three amusement parks in
19 southwestern Pennsylvania: Kennywood in west
20 Mifflin, Idlewild and Soak Zone in Ligonier,
21 and Sandcastle in West Homestead. I also serve
22 as the chairman of the Pennsylvania Amusement
23 Parks Legislative Committee.

24 Currently in the State of
25 Pennsylvania there are 18 fixed site

1 amusement/water parks. That's more than any
2 other state in the Union. Just for your
3 information, California is next with 13. With
4 that, 10 of our 18 parks are over 100 years of
5 age. Hershey Park--I'll give them a little
6 plug--is 100 years of age this year. They are
7 the youngest of the group.

8 With that, most were started as
9 trolley or train parks, back at the turn of the
10 last century, and have been well maintained and
11 upgraded during their long history.

12 In our relatively short-operating
13 season of about 130 days, we entertain more
14 than 11 million visitors collectively across
15 the state.

16 Our employment figures for last year
17 were: College students, 4100; high school
18 students, 6900; nonstudents or adults 3,000;
19 and teachers about 300. Total seasonal
20 employment is almost 14,500. Total full-time
21 employment, year-round people is a little
22 better than a thousand people.

23 As you can see, this is just our
24 industry. When you add this to the other
25 summer industries, such as campgrounds, fairs,

1 carnivals, summer camps, swimming pools, golf
2 courses and summer vacation resorts and their
3 related industries and suppliers, these figures
4 will grow dramatically.

5 Our concern today deals with the
6 opening of schools in Pennsylvania prior to the
7 Labor Day holiday, the traditional end of
8 summer. Let me first state that the
9 Pennsylvania Amusement Parks Association
10 wholeheartedly agrees and supports the idea
11 that the students in Pennsylvania schools
12 should have the best and most complete
13 education that be provided for them.

14 The Pennsylvania Amusement Parks
15 Association also believes that a summer job is
16 not just an earning experience, it's a learning
17 experience. Over the long history of our
18 member parks we have provided hundreds of
19 thousands of kids with their first jobs. We
20 feel that there is more to the educational
21 process in America than just attending school
22 in the traditional way.

23 The experience of a summer job
24 provides students with several educational
25 opportunities such as showing them

1 dollars throughout the entire summer leisure
2 industry during the last two weeks of August
3 cost the state millions of dollars, as you've
4 heard before.

5 The Pennsylvania Amusement Parks
6 Association is in favor of legislation that
7 would require schools in the Commonwealth to
8 open after the Labor Day holiday.

9 Thank you for allowing me to share my
10 views on this matter. Your time and attention
11 is greatly appreciated.

12 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Thank you, Mr.
13 Quinn, very much. Couple of questions.

14 It occurred to me during your
15 testimony whether all of you or any of you had
16 the opportunity to raise directly with the
17 school districts involved your own specific
18 circumstances, and what was the result if you
19 did approach them about starting after Labor
20 Day?

21 MR. FINK: I was going to say that
22 our organization, the chamber, actually has a
23 partnership with the eight school districts in
24 Lycoming County. We made them aware of this
25 issue. We've been working on this as an

1 association for about a little over a year now,
2 and both the Visitors Bureau and Chamber talked
3 to them and made them aware of this.

4 However, from our perspective, at
5 least with the Little League World Series,
6 we're not as concerned -- I mean, we want to
7 see it change not only locally, but it also is
8 statewide because people will be traveling in
9 to experience the Little League World Series.

10 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: So there was an
11 agreement of some sort relative to at least the
12 Little League World Series?

13 MR. FINK: There was just -- We made
14 them aware of the fact that this was going to
15 be taking place. We said we would hope that
16 you would understand it and support this.

17 Beyond that, it's not gone any
18 further. We've not pushed it with them. I've
19 got some e-mails from the superintendents
20 locally because it's hit the paper here, and
21 they're not -- At least the e-mails I got were
22 not in favor of it.

23 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Thank you. For
24 Mr. Quinn, in your testimony, the second page
25 you talk about the two weeks in August that

1 create you the largest problem, but we're only
2 talking, I thought, about two or three days.
3 You make us aware --

4 MR. QUINN: The further west you go
5 in this state the earlier schools have a
6 tendency to open up. This past year I believe
7 the local school districts around my properties
8 were open an entire week before. They went
9 back the 28th of August. Labor Day last year
10 was, I forget what, the 6th I think. So it was
11 really two weeks' worth.

12 It got so crippling that we -- All
13 three of my parks are, in fact, closed this
14 upcoming year during that time period. We just
15 cannot -- Kennywood used to be open at 5
16 o'clock each afternoon, but that was a dismal
17 failure.

18 You had asked a question about people
19 talking to their local school district. I'll
20 give you two points very quickly, Mr. Chairman.
21 I went to my superintendents, two successive
22 different superintendents of my local school
23 district who I pay an enormous amount of
24 amusement tax. For those of you who know me, I
25 beat that drum too.

1 With that, I pointed out the longer I
2 operate, the more they get in their budget.
3 And they looked at me and went, oh, yeah,
4 that's right. We still open before Labor Day
5 in those school districts, so they didn't catch
6 that point.

7 The other is the two parks in Blair
8 County, both went to their local school
9 districts and tried to make an agreement. Both
10 of those parks are still closed before Labor
11 Day.

12 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Other members?
13 Chairman Nailor.

14 REPRESENTATIVE NAILOR: Thank you.
15 Thank you for your testimony.

16 As Bob was talking about,
17 Representative Godshall, about the fact when we
18 were in school, it was started after Labor Day.
19 We always ended I think on a Wednesday before.
20 We had a huge one-day street fair called
21 Jubilee--I'll get that plug in--in
22 Mechanicsburg. We also ended the day before on
23 that Wednesday.

24 I guess what I'm looking at, and I'm
25 not really confident that I know the facts

1 here. What happens at the beginning of your
2 season, Memorial Day, and after Memorial Day,
3 how -- If the schooling starts after Labor Day
4 and goes into mid-June, how will that affect
5 you at that end?

6 MR. QUINN: Kennywood has a unique
7 situation. We have a little tradition in
8 western Pennsylvania known as school picnics
9 where whole school districts shut down on a day
10 and come out to our place of operation. Now,
11 if you tried try to institute that anywhere
12 else and it wasn't a tradition, you'd probably
13 get laughed out of the superintendent's office.

14 But with that, it's been going on
15 since the late 1800's, and so, that is really
16 all. We have cut back early. We are now open
17 only in May. We used to be open in April.
18 Most parks will operate weekends starting in
19 April and then usually around Memorial Day open
20 daily.

21 It's still a little tight. We tend
22 to hire college-age kids early on and rely on
23 the high school age kids to finish up with the
24 season. So with that, the colleges usually
25 gets out much earlier.

1 MR. OLIVER: That was a question that
2 we also asked of our tourism industry partners,
3 hotels and other attractions. And their
4 feeling was that business always was slower in
5 June, it would have less of a impact on them
6 than when they had already geared up for the
7 season with employment, and traditional summer
8 traveling tends to be more heavily in July and
9 August than it would be in May and June.

10 REPRESENTATIVE NAILOR: Just a
11 follow-up to that. There was a question asked
12 of me, so I'll pass it on. Would you foresee a
13 request for legislation to put the school
14 district even more condensed and you start
15 after Labor Day and end by Memorial Day, would
16 you see trying to introduce legislation or
17 requesting legislation that required an ending
18 date as well if this were advanced?

19 MR. OLIVER: I certainly wouldn't.

20 MR. QUINN: And I agree,
21 Representative, Mr. Chairman. The situation
22 is -- It's easier to have an impact in June
23 when we're not as busy than we balance the end
24 of the summer.

25 REPRESENTATIVE NAILOR: Thank you.

1 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Representative
3 Scavello.

4 REPRESENTATIVE SCAVELLO: Thank you,
5 Mr. Chairman, and thank you, gentlemen, for
6 testifying.

7 I live in the Poconos, my district is
8 in the Poconos. I have a tremendous amount
9 of -- We have the new water park, I have
10 Camelbeach, so I understand what you're saying.

11 I found that because of school
12 starting earlier some of the kids are not
13 getting jobs in the summer because --
14 especially the Camelbeach area where they need
15 to hire folks that are going to be there
16 through the Labor Day weekend. That last
17 weekend is probably one of their best, and
18 unfortunately, they have to close some of their
19 attractions. Do you run into that same
20 situation?

21 MR. QUINN: We do. We have a bonus
22 system, and most of the parks and attraction
23 members in our association has a bonus system.
24 But the bonus system is until you have to start
25 school. So we don't -- Nobody is punished for

1 having to leave early.

2 The other thing came up about sports.
3 You'll find almost all the parks, school takes
4 precedence whether it's football, whether it's
5 band. You have -- That's an excuse not to come
6 to work, and that's fine. You know, we're only
7 here for a little bit, you have to do those
8 things forever. So we work very well with
9 those.

10 The other thing about that is, if you
11 look, there's 55 members of the football team,
12 110 members of band, that's a very tiny number
13 to -- You know, there's a lot more other sports
14 in winter and spring that are more
15 participatory, but it doesn't -- It's not as
16 big in the fall session.

17 REPRESENTATIVE SCAVELLO: I
18 understand what you're saying, and I applaud
19 you for taking the school first.

20 In my district we have a fair. And I
21 notice there's testimony of a fair operator
22 here later on. It's the last week, and
23 schools, of course, are open and they let the
24 kids out of school early to go work there.
25 What's the point of opening up the schools?

1 You know, it really -- And that's happening.

2 This year our schools are opening up
3 after Labor Day. We've come to an agreement
4 that when Labor Day comes, the 4th or 5th, we
5 open up after. And when Labor Day is the 8th
6 or the 9th, or whatever, we'll open up before
7 Labor Day. And that was some -- And I'm hoping
8 that that stays in place, but this was an
9 agreement that they made and they were willing
10 to work with the businesses, and hopefully,
11 that will continue until we get some
12 legislation passed. Thank you very much.

13 MR. QUINN: Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Representative
15 Costa.

16 REPRESENTATIVE COSTA: Thank you, Mr.
17 Chairman.

18 Gentlemen, thank you all for
19 testifying. But, Andy, you actually just
20 answered my question that I wanted to ask. But
21 during your testimony I heard you say you're
22 going to close early in the fall. You're not
23 going to do the Fall Fantasy anymore?

24 MR. QUINN: We'll do that. But the
25 week before Labor Day last year we were open at

1 5 o'clock each day. This year we're closed.
2 This is the first time, by the way, that we've
3 closed since 1972 that week.

4 In '72 we had Hurricane Agnes. It
5 happened to be my first year working there.
6 We had Hurricane Agnes so we opened that week,
7 tried to salvage a couple more dollars out of
8 it. That's the last time we were closed that
9 week. So, this year is the first time since
10 '72.

11 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Representative
12 Millard.

13 REPRESENTATIVE MILLARD: Thank you
14 Mr. Chairman, and thank you, gentlemen, for
15 testifying today.

16 A couple of questions here that have
17 been asked, but I'm going to ask it in a
18 different tone here. Mr. Fink, you mentioned
19 about the school board; that you approached
20 them about the Williamsport Little League and
21 all of that event that takes place over there.
22 What exactly was their reason for not, you
23 know, complying to your wish?

24 MR. FINK: All we did when we
25 approached them, we made them aware of the fact

1 that our organization was going to support this
2 initiative. We didn't go any further with the
3 school board.

4 Actually, our conversation was
5 directly with the superintendents. There's a
6 new superintendent in Williamsport School
7 District since last year, so we've not had that
8 conversation again.

9 REPRESENTATIVE MILLARD: Would there
10 be anything to prevent your organization from
11 reaching in accord with your local school
12 district?

13 MR. FINK: Well, the local school
14 district is just one portion of this issue for
15 us. The greater issue is the fact that people
16 who want to come and vacation and experience
17 the Little League World Series, the
18 championship game is that Sunday that they
19 televise on ABC.

20 And everybody talks about, I want to
21 go make it to that championship game. When
22 they see that their local school district,
23 whether it be out in western Pennsylvania,
24 southeastern Pennsylvania, wherever they may
25 be--There's 88 percent of those school

1 districts that are still opening prior to Labor
2 Day, and most of them are opening that
3 following day--they can't come. They can't
4 make that travel because of the start time of
5 the game.

6 And that's dictated by a contract
7 with ABC. Some folks have said, well, if it's
8 such a big issue for Little League, well,
9 Little League has a contract with ABC and
10 that's when they play the game.

11 REPRESENTATIVE MILLARD: Thank you.
12 One final question for Mr. Quinn. Just for the
13 record -- Kennywood, and I know where it's at,
14 but just for the record where exactly in
15 Pennsylvania is it located?

16 MR. QUINN: It's in West Mifflin,
17 which is eight miles due east of downtown
18 Pittsburgh.

19 REPRESENTATIVE MILLARD: Okay. And
20 what is your radius that you draw your patrons
21 from?

22 MR. QUINN: Probably a hundred mile.
23 We are what is known as an urban park, which
24 means start out from our home in the morning,
25 you come to Kennywood, you go back to your

1 home. We do get tourists in western
2 Pennsylvania, but primarily it's an urban park.

3 REPRESENTATIVE MILLARD: And do you
4 get a lot of tourist that come in or patrons
5 that come in from Ohio?

6 MR. QUINN: Ohio and West Virginia,
7 yes.

8 REPRESENTATIVE MILLARD: And would
9 you know what Ohio's start date for school is?

10 MR. QUINN: It is Post-Labor Day.

11 REPRESENTATIVE MILLARD: Post-Labor
12 Day. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: You're welcome.
14 Representative Samuelson for the final
15 question.

16 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: Thank you.
17 Just to follow up on Mr. Quinn's comments. To
18 thank the amusement parks for some of the
19 existing partnerships that exist between
20 amusement parks and school districts, up in my
21 area, in Lehigh Valley, last Saturday Dorney
22 Park had a safety patrol day where they invited
23 all the fifth graders who are on safety patrol
24 to come to the park.

25 Now, there's a community aspect to

1 this because they did give the fifth graders a
2 discount on the ticket price that they had to
3 pay, but also it was a smart business decision
4 to have all those families know that Dorney
5 Park was opened on May 5th. So just to thank
6 you for some of those partnerships that are
7 existing right now.

8 MR. QUINN: Thank you,
9 Representative.

10 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Thank you very
11 much. It was very informative. We appreciate
12 your testimony, and you are excused.

13 MR. QUINN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 MR. OLIVER: Thank you.

15 MR. FINK: Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Our next panel
17 will be made up of a gentleman by the name of
18 William LaCoff, President, Pennsylvania School
19 Boards Association, and also a school director,
20 although I don't know what school district
21 you're from--I'm sure you're be able to tell
22 us--Jason Hopp, president, Wilson School
23 District Board of Directors; and David
24 Hutchinson, school board member, State College
25 Area School District.

1 Gentlemen, we do not have prepared
2 testimony from you. Do you have copies
3 available to us? Do you have it?

4 Let me rephrase that. The chairman
5 doesn't have one, but I'm sure I'll get it.
6 And as with the other panel, we will hear
7 testimony from all three and then we will open
8 it up for questions. Mr. LaCoff, I guess
9 you'll be first.

10 MR. LaCOFF: Thank you. Good
11 morning. My name is William LaCoff, but I
12 prefer Bill. I'm a school director in the Owen
13 J. Roberts School District in Chester County,
14 and I'm the 2007 president of the Pennsylvania
15 School Boards Association.

16 I'd like to begin by thanking
17 Chairmen Tangretti and Nailor for holding this
18 hearing on House Bill 258. Pennsylvania's
19 school board members appreciate your efforts to
20 put together a fair and balanced hearing on a
21 topic that has long divided education
22 stakeholders and the tourism industry.

23 We hope that after today you will
24 have a better understanding of the various
25 factors that school administrators and school

1 directors must consider when making a decision
2 about their individual school calendars,
3 particularly the student start date, and why we
4 feel the study released by the Legislative
5 Budget and Finance Committee in June 2006 does
6 not provide accurate information regarding the
7 Labor Day issue.

8 First, I'd like to begin my testimony
9 by noting that my district's student start date
10 has been after Labor Day for several decades.
11 Parenthetically, in our collective wisdom, we
12 can only think of one day we started before
13 Labor Day in about 30 years, so it's certainly
14 not typical for us.

15 Several years ago the administration
16 moved the student start prior to Labor Day, a
17 move that was supported by the teachers' union.
18 Our teachers wanted the school year to begin
19 earlier because in their experiences, students
20 were less focused on studies after Memorial Day
21 weekend and in the first weeks of June. Their
22 hope was that if students started classes
23 earlier, the district would be able to dismiss
24 for summer vacation earlier in June.

25 In response to the change in the

1 school calendar, our administration received a
2 great deal of outcry from parents in objection
3 to the proposed change. Parents complained
4 about this initiative, because in most
5 southeast communities family vacations to the
6 Jersey Shore are a traditional rite of passage
7 that marks the end of summer.

8 Additionally, parents cited work
9 obligations and conflicting schedules as
10 reasons for their opposition to a pre-Labor Day
11 student start date. In the end, the
12 administration and my fellow board members
13 decided to maintain a post-Labor Day student
14 start date. For the Owen J. Roberts community,
15 students and parents, a post-Labor Day start
16 was simply the most appropriate course of
17 action.

18 So, what is the point of the story
19 I've just told you? The point is that, issues
20 with school calendar, particularly student
21 start dates, don't need to be addressed by
22 state legislation. Decisions regarding school
23 calendars are local community issues that must
24 be considered by each individual school
25 district and community in the Commonwealth,

1 because there is no one school district or
2 community that is exactly the same or has the
3 same needs.

4 Owen J. Roberts School District does
5 not have a thriving tourist industry, but we do
6 have parents and students that prioritize those
7 final days of summer with their families. My
8 fellow board members did not simply brush aside
9 those concerns. We responded to our
10 community's desires as their elected officials,
11 just as all of you do for your local
12 communities. I'm sure parents in other
13 districts and communities would receive the
14 same consideration.

15 A blanket mandate for all 501 school
16 districts' calendars would be unfair for those
17 districts who are not located in traditional
18 tourist areas and consider weather conditions
19 first when deciding on a school calendar. My
20 fellow board members and I contend that if the
21 amusement industry has a problem with a
22 district's student start date in a particular
23 area, they should resolve the issue with that
24 particular district, and we've heard a couple
25 examples this morning. I think that's entirely

1 performed the study on behalf of the
2 Legislative Budget and Finance Committee,
3 compared a school calendar from the 1970's and
4 one from the 2006-2007 school year.

5 However, as a basis for this
6 comparison, TrippUmbach contacted only one
7 school district for information. This single
8 school district was used to represent all
9 501 districts in Pennsylvania. Now, the
10 members of this committee collectively
11 represent 119 of Pennsylvania's school
12 districts.

13 I encourage you to ask yourselves:
14 Do you think that only one of the 119 school
15 districts that you represent could be used as a
16 representation for all those districts' needs
17 and communities, let alone those of
18 all 501 school districts? Do you think that
19 the Derry Township and Donegal School districts
20 face the same issues in calendar decisions that
21 Pittsburgh, Hempfield area, or Butler area
22 school districts experience? Using only one
23 school district as a basis for comparison is
24 irresponsible when you consider the diverse
25 needs and geography of Pennsylvania's

1 501 school districts.

2 By contrast, the authors contacted
3 the Kennywood, Sesame Place, Sandcastle and
4 Idlewild amusement parks, as well as the
5 Pittsburgh Pirates and the Little League World
6 Series to seek information for their study.
7 When one considers this obvious disparity, it
8 is reasonable to question the objectivity of
9 the study.

10 Furthermore, the study fails to
11 accurately assess the real economic impact of
12 the proposed change in the start of school
13 terms. TrippUmbach based its calculations of
14 economic loss on the assumption that all
15 districts begin their terms the Monday prior to
16 Labor Day when this is simply not true. In
17 fact, many districts begin classes on Tuesday,
18 Wednesday or Thursday.

19 For the 2006-2007 school year, State
20 College Area School District opened its doors
21 on Thursday, August 31st. Derry Township
22 School District started on Monday, August 28,
23 but also gave students and teachers a four-day
24 holiday weekend, just as many districts do that
25 open prior to Labor Day.

1 districts as they adopt their academic
2 calendars. Pennsylvania's school districts
3 provide its teachers with adequate income for
4 their services.

5 According to the Bureau of Labor and
6 Statistics' May 2005 data on occupational
7 employment and wages, Pennsylvania's average
8 annual wage for elementary school teachers is
9 higher than the national average. Therefore,
10 school districts should not have to prioritize
11 further occupational endeavors for its
12 employees as they also balance the needs of
13 their local communities, parents, and most
14 importantly, the educational needs of students.

15 Pennsylvania's school districts are
16 charged with the education of students. PSBA
17 questions whether the author of the economic
18 impact study would typically recommend that
19 business entities coordinate and consider
20 employees' secondary job aspirations and state
21 economic impacts when making decisions about
22 employee work schedules.

23 In conclusion, I'd like to once again
24 emphasize PSBA's opposition to an unwarranted
25 state mandate that is capable of being resolved

1 at the local level. Each school district in
2 the Commonwealth is faced with a unique set of
3 circumstances governing the start of their
4 school term each year. There are positive
5 examples of tourist companies working with
6 their local districts in the Pocono region to
7 come to a solution that is agreeable for
8 districts, students, communities and
9 businesses. I urge this committee to encourage
10 local cooperation on this issue and not impose
11 another state mandate.

12 Thank you for your consideration of
13 PSBA's concerns. I think next we'll hear
14 from -- unless you have questions now.

15 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: No, no. Next
16 presenter.

17 MR. LaCOFF: Jason Hopp from the
18 Wilson School District.

19 MR. HOPP: Good morning, everyone.
20 My name is Jason Hopp. I am president of the
21 Wilson School Board, which is based in West Law
22 in Berks County. Wilson is made up of
23 5700 students. I come here today as president
24 of the school board. I also come here as a
25 parent. I have a seven year old, a five year

1 old and a two year old. I also come here as
2 someone whose family has a business.

3 My family-owned business, Redner's
4 Warehouse Markets, is based in Reading, has
5 40 grocery stores, 12 convenience stores,
6 employs 4700 people, and employs roughly about
7 500 to a thousand high school-aged children, so
8 I'm looking at this from both sides.

9 I've submitted to you today the
10 testimony -- written testimony, excuse me, so
11 I'm not going to belabor the point and read it.
12 I think today is all about a dialogue, and
13 talking to each other and how we're all part of
14 the same team. I don't want to use sports
15 metaphors too much. But school districts and
16 tourism need to work together. So I'm going to
17 focus more on an issue that I went through at
18 Wilson last year, and that was a teacher
19 strike.

20 In April of 2006, our teachers chose
21 to walk off the job, and they were allowed to
22 walk off the job for six days under state law.
23 As you know, state law allows our teachers to
24 strike. Now, the state law also requires that
25 even if there's a strike there has to be

1 180 days completed by, I believe it's June
2 30th, so there is limitations to that. So the
3 farther you go in the year the less you can
4 strike, so that was a six-day strike and they
5 had to go back to work.

6 That year our school calendar, we
7 started three days before the Labor Day
8 holiday. I believe in Berks County--I'm going
9 off the top of my head here--every school
10 district except for the City of Reading starts
11 before Labor Day. It's usually about two or
12 three days before Labor Day.

13 So, our calendar was scheduled to end
14 June 12th. Because of the six-day strike we
15 were forced to go to June 20th to complete our
16 180 days. Obviously, with that we then entered
17 entered into a settlement -- At the time the
18 main issue, like every other 501 school
19 districts when they're negotiating with their
20 teachers, it's all about salary and it's all
21 about health care benefits right now. I mean,
22 that's what it is. So those were the issues.
23 We settled it over the summer, so thankfully,
24 we didn't have a strike in the fall.

25 But, I also, not only being the

1 president of the Wilson School Board, I went to
2 Wilson High School as a student. In my ninth
3 grade year there was a strike at the beginning
4 of the year, and that strike went for about two
5 weeks. So, clearly then those days needed to
6 be made up, so you're either going to eat up
7 all of the holidays that you can eat up, except
8 the ones that you're required to have, or you
9 push the school calendar back even further.

10 So, last year because we had to go
11 six days later, that was June 20th. Now,
12 keeping in mind we started three days before
13 Labor Day, our end date was June 20th. Our
14 scheduled end date was June 12th.

15 And I believe the distinguished
16 comments from Chairman Godshall cited to a
17 study by Mansfield. If my students at Wilson
18 wanted to go to the summer term in Mansfield
19 they couldn't, because Mansfield starts their
20 summer term June 12th. Edinboro starts June
21 11th -- Actually, it was June 11th, excuse me.
22 Shippensburg starts June 11th. Bloomsburg
23 starts June 18th. Lock Haven starts June 25th
24 and Villanova June 29th. Those are just
25 examples, and they're in the written comments.

1 So clearly, even starting early
2 before Labor Day, there is a dramatic impact in
3 the options of our students that some might
4 need to be able to get into college to go to
5 summer sessions.

6 So, I think if this committee is -- I
7 would suggest that if this committee is looking
8 to mandate start dates for our public schools,
9 it's part and parcel, there has to be a
10 consideration for our public universities also,
11 because -- Because under this scenario, our
12 students wouldn't be able to go to those school
13 summer sessions.

14 Secondly, there's comments that were
15 made by Representative Godshall in his
16 testimony regarding the burden on employers.
17 As I had stated, our family business employs
18 hundreds of high school students, and it's just
19 part of the business, we need to plan. We have
20 found that it's not the Labor Day week where
21 you see the pinch. It's the start of PIAA
22 sport season is where you start seeing the
23 pinch, and that's usually the second week of
24 August.

25 There were comments made that it's a

1 Hutchinson.

2 MR. HUTCHINSON: Good morning. My
3 name is David Hutchinson. I'm a school
4 director with the State College Area School
5 District where I've served in that capacity for
6 the last three years. If it's acceptable with
7 the committee, I'm going to abbreviate my oral
8 testimony to allow time for questions.

9 I'd like to thank Chairmen Tangretti
10 and Nailor for convening this hearing on House
11 Bill 258. When this legislation was reported
12 out of this committee in the 2005-06
13 legislative session, I was very concerned that
14 one of the Commonwealth's most important
15 responsibilities, the education of our
16 children, were not fully being factored into
17 the discussion about the bill. My hope is that
18 with this hearing, all of you will have a
19 better understanding of the diverse issues that
20 impact the decision making in school calendars.

21 I understand that this committee is
22 charged with oversight of tourism issues that
23 have power to impact the Commonwealth's
24 economy. Nevertheless, as you know,
25 Pennsylvania's economic success depends on

1 developing youth who are prepared to enter the
2 work force or post-secondary education.

3 As this committee considers the
4 concerns of the tourism and amusement industry,
5 I hope that you will remember that school
6 boards have no agenda in school calendar
7 decisions other than to ensure the students are
8 learning in optimal environments -- education
9 environments with due consideration to local
10 community concerns and events.

11 Although there may be economic and
12 social value to extended summer employment,
13 PSBA and my fellow board members believe that
14 the Commonwealth's foremost priority should be
15 what is best for our children and local
16 communities. For this reason, as well as
17 others, I respectfully request that you oppose
18 House Bill 258.

19 Each year the school calendar, and
20 specifically, whether classes should begin
21 prior to Labor Day, is one of the most
22 contentious issues that my school board faces,
23 although as I might add, not the most
24 contentious. Within our discussions we
25 consider the actual date of Labor Day for that

1 year, as well as two significant events that
2 impact our community, the Centre County Grange
3 Fair and Encampment and Penn State University's
4 annual spring break.

5 When Labor Day falls later than
6 normal, this can delay the start and end of the
7 school term. In State College this issue is
8 further complicated by the grange fair, a
9 133-year tradition ends on the Thursday prior
10 to Labor Day weekend, and it's widely
11 considered the most important cultural event of
12 the year in the neighboring community of Penn's
13 Valley.

14 A relatively small number of our
15 students, especially those who are interested
16 in the agricultural sciences, are directly
17 affected, as well as a somewhat larger number
18 of our faculty and staff, many of whom either
19 reside or have family in that community.

20 The other anomaly that State College
21 must consider with its school calendar is Penn
22 State University's spring break. With the
23 realities of No Child Left Behind and the
24 requirements to achieve adequately yearly
25 progress, it would be irresponsible of my board

1 to do otherwise. In order to meet AYP
2 requirements, districts must have a 90 percent
3 attendance rate or an 80 percent graduation
4 rate. This means that school districts must
5 consider attendance trends when designing
6 school calendars.

7 Recognizing that many of our students
8 have parents who are employed at Penn State
9 University and often utilize that time for
10 family vacations, the State College Area School
11 District also schedules a spring break to
12 coincide with the university. While some
13 people would consider this to be an artificial
14 holiday, holding classes during that week in
15 early March would jeopardize attendance
16 calculations for AYP purposes, and more
17 importantly, would be ineffective use of
18 instructional time given the number of students
19 who would be out of school with their families.

20 I would also like to add that several
21 years ago our school district added several
22 instructional days to our calendar. This is
23 something that our community both supports and
24 values.

25 So with these considerations in mind,

1 in the current school year we often begin
2 classes on the last day of the fair, which is
3 August 31st, 2006. Many of our teachers like
4 the decision because they got students into the
5 classroom earlier and enabled them to get the
6 so-called housekeeping items out of the way
7 prior to the weekend.

8 Nevertheless, when my school board
9 urged our community members to contact us with
10 calendar suggestions for the 2007-08 year, a
11 little more than half of those who responded
12 favored starting classes after Labor Day.
13 Taking that into consideration, along with this
14 year's early Labor Day, the school board
15 eventually voted unanimously to begin classes
16 after Labor Day for the next year.

17 I tell you this to emphasize the fact
18 that a state mandate that further restricts
19 school districts will not help us to fulfill
20 our responsibility to our community.
21 Pennsylvania's 501 school districts with
22 diverse communities and students must work to
23 find the best means to provide a quality
24 education to students tailored for their
25 individual communities. Eliminating that

1 flexibility, as proposed in this bill, does not
2 serve our communities or our students.

3 School calendar decisions are never
4 easy for any of our school boards, but we do
5 our best to balance community desires with what
6 we know is right for students. I urge this
7 committee not to mandate a blanket approach to
8 school calendars that does not accurately
9 represent the needs and calendar considerations
10 for all Pennsylvania school districts. Allow
11 this decision to remain with locally-elected
12 school board members who take the time to
13 listen to their constituents, while keeping
14 students our foremost priority. Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Thank you,
16 gentlemen, very much. Just a couple questions.
17 Mr. Hopp, I'm curious as to whether you
18 would -- as it relates to school strikes be
19 willing to consider the fact that under
20 Chairman Godshall's bill, starting on
21 page 1, line 15 through page 2, line 4, there's
22 a specific exemption for school boards who have
23 circumstances beyond their control. They can
24 get approval from the Secretary of Education to
25 start the school year earlier than Labor Day if

1 this were to pass.

2 Now, it doesn't mention school
3 strikes particularly. It talks about major
4 construction, renovation or natural disasters.
5 But certainly we could add language dealing
6 with school strikes which would address the
7 concerns that you've raised relative to school
8 strikes, since it relates to the beginning of
9 the school year.

10 MR. HOPP: Well, obviously, that
11 makes it better, but I think the problem would
12 lie in the fact that I don't think you would
13 ever hit that exemption is going into -- where
14 the teachers are without a contract going into
15 a school year. They haven't voted, their
16 membership hasn't voted to strike.

17 So, we're passing the calendar at
18 the -- I'm trying to think when we did it.
19 It's the year before, basically. I don't want
20 to say it's a full year ahead of time, but it's
21 a good six to eight months in the prior school
22 year.

23 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: And I don't want
24 to get into a debate with you on this.
25 Obviously, you know a whole lot more about

1 negotiations with your local teachers' union
2 than I do.

3 But, if you're in an Act 88 situation
4 and there's contract negotiations ongoing, and
5 as you mentioned you had -- they had a
6 six-day-strike-only window because of when they
7 chose to strike. Your anticipation was that if
8 you didn't settle, you were going to have to
9 have a strike in the fall too. You did settle
10 over the summer as you stated.

11 But the anticipation of that
12 potential strike certainly would qualify as an
13 exemption for, if we were to put that in here,
14 as it's laid out in Representative Godshall's
15 bill; would it not?

16 MR. HOPP: Well --

17 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Let me just
18 finish my point, I guess. In that, then you
19 would be able to design your school year based
20 on that anticipation, which may or may not
21 happen, but you could certainly do that.

22 MR. HOPP: There's two issues with
23 that, sir. This distinguished body, obviously,
24 whatever it says the law is, is what the law
25 is. So if this body is going to say that the

1 law is, is that, if there is a possibility -- a
2 possibility that next year they could strike
3 and that constitutes an -- meaning, if there is
4 no contract, that would have to be a
5 possibility, then the calendar could be redone,
6 yes, that could satisfy that.

7 However, my experience tells me that
8 once the calendars are approved, families build
9 their schedules around those calendars. We're
10 approving these calendars well in advance. If
11 we approve these calendars six months ahead of
12 of time, and then four months later change the
13 calendar, that's going to be problematic for
14 the families of the Wilson School District.

15 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Understood.
16 Just for all three of you, Chairman Godshall
17 went to great pains to discuss school district
18 scheduling and built in days off throughout the
19 school year. And his conclusion, based on his
20 study and other information that he and his
21 staff have presented -- prepared and presented
22 seems to indicate that there's a lot of
23 flexibility within the school year; that we
24 could do this and not affect to a great extent
25 where you all end up academically in terms of

1 days of instruction.

2 And, by the way, just as a side bar,
3 we did invite PIAA to testify and they said it
4 had no effect on their situation and chose not
5 to testify.

6 But aside from that, just for the
7 record, would any or all of you care to comment
8 on that particular aspect? When you're
9 designing your budget, do you build in days
10 that are used in such a way that you could --

11 For example, the spring-break
12 situation coincides with Penn State's. Is
13 there such flexibility within your scheduling
14 that you're able to accommodate what we think
15 is going to be a huge economic generator for
16 the Commonwealth?

17 MR. HUTCHINSON: I can only speak for
18 our school district, obviously. There are no
19 days in our calendar that we could create. All
20 the days off that we currently have are
21 generally mandated by Act 80, or another
22 example of a date that you might consider extra
23 is the day after Thanksgiving, the Monday
24 following Thanksgiving which in central
25 Pennsylvania is very near to a national

1 holiday, the first day of hunting season. So,
2 it would be, again, the same type of situation
3 as Penn State's spring break.

4 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: So no days in
5 your --

6 MR. HUTCHINSON: That's correct.

7 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: -- school
8 district that you can --

9 MR. LaCOFF: Obviously, you can't say
10 there's no days, because when you make your
11 calendar, you're using your best judgment based
12 on what's going to be best for the students,
13 and what's going to happen with the weather.

14 But, each year we have increasing
15 demands on the schools for performance. We
16 talked about high-stakes testing earlier.
17 Well, there's going to be more high-stakes
18 testing coming, and there's going to be more
19 need for preparation and there's going to be
20 more need for teacher preparation.

21 One of the things that school boards
22 do in their negotiation with teachers is try to
23 get as many teacher in-service days as
24 possible, and a lot of these days are sprinkled
25 through the year. We also have -- For obvious

1 reasons, you don't want to do all your training
2 at one point, the three days before Labor Day
3 for example.

4 We also have the issues of closing
5 schools for parent conferences. Mr. Hopp
6 talked about the upset in your community if you
7 change your calendar. We had three contentious
8 meetings trying to set the closing date of
9 school over that very issue. People wanted to
10 know months in advance because they build their
11 calendars at home around the calendars that we
12 build at the school. So, while there is
13 flexibility, we don't have much wiggle room. I
14 mean, there just isn't much available there.

15 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Let me just
16 interpret you because we're running out of time
17 with this particular panel.

18 Just very quickly. If you have
19 teacher in-service days, it ought not to affect
20 what Mr. Godshall is trying to do, correct? I
21 mean, you can have teacher in-service days
22 prior to Labor Day and still start school after
23 Labor Day and it wouldn't have an effect on
24 what we're trying to do?

25 MR. LaCOFF: Yeah, but I think that's

1 already the situation. I mean, most of us have
2 teacher in-service days early, and we still
3 need them later. My concern is, if we end up
4 in the situation where we drive the school year
5 to finish later, you do have those elements of,
6 should I say lack of concentration because it's
7 almost summertime.

8 If you put those aside, we have
9 students that participate -- I have a list of
10 them, and because of the late hour I'm not
11 going to read them. But we have school
12 directors that point out to me that many of
13 their students are going to leave early anyway
14 because of starting college and have to get in
15 the first or second week of June. There's lots
16 of important academic programs for students
17 that are voluntary, but they're key programs in
18 their education and they begin early, and they
19 would suffer.

20 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Members?
21 Chairman Nailor.

22 REPRESENTATIVE NAILOR: Thank you,
23 Mr. Chairman.

24 I had asked some questions of the
25 other panel that I was asked as a member in the

1 House, and I have a few points I want to make
2 here and questions I want to ask. I think you
3 made a lot of legitimate and reasonable points,
4 as did the first panel.

5 One of the things that I've been
6 asked time and time again, according to the
7 figures we were given there was only 12 percent
8 of the schools that do start after Labor Day
9 now, 88 percent do not.

10 In the tourism industry, the
11 amusement industry, and so on, they're telling
12 us that we try to meet with our school boards
13 and they really don't want to consider our
14 requests. We have legitimate concerns as well.
15 We talk to them, but we get nowhere. I'm not a
16 person who favors big government and statewide
17 mandate, but I think there are legitimate
18 concerns.

19 I guess my question is this: You
20 have a lot of regional meetings, state meetings
21 with the school board association, are you
22 making any genuine effort to have your people,
23 school board members statewide, sit down --
24 Because it only affects certain areas of the
25 state. Not every county and not every school

1 district is directly affected by what would be
2 passed here if it's enacted into law.

3 Are you encouraging your people in
4 those areas where it is a genuine concern to be
5 a little more giving and maybe work with the
6 amusement/tourism/travel industry so that it
7 doesn't have to be a statewide mandate?

8 MR. LaCOFF: Chairman Nailor, I have
9 to say that, specifically, that issue we have
10 not. But there's two points to make about
11 that.

12 First of all, districts try to align
13 their calendar with their IU's because of the
14 interaction between school districts for
15 transportation in sports and whatnot, and also
16 for education opportunities for the teachers.
17 So, it would be reasonable that if we wanted to
18 make a change, it could be done with a dozen or
19 two dozen school districts at a time.

20 But in anticipation of coming here
21 today I met with representatives from Region
22 15, my home region. There's 27 school
23 districts there, and I was in Titusville at
24 their region meeting. They represent more than
25 27 districts in that meeting. Granted, in the

1 room I was sitting in, in total there may have
2 only been 24, maybe 30 school districts
3 represented altogether. I asked by a show of
4 hands who opens before Labor Day because we do
5 not.

6 In the Chester County-Delaware County
7 IU there was only one school district. And in
8 Titusville that represents a lot of districts
9 in the northwest corner of the state, my rough
10 recollection is it was only about half. So,
11 I'm encouraged to try to find out through our
12 own resources whether that number is 88 or
13 maybe it's closer to 50/50.

14 REPRESENTATIVE NAILOR: I'd be very
15 interested knowing myself, I really would. If
16 you could get that information to us, all the
17 members of the panel, I would appreciate it.

18 MR. LaCOFF: Thank you. We will do
19 that.

20 REPRESENTATIVE NAILOR: Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Representative
22 Ellis.

23 REPRESENTATIVE ELLIS: Thank you, Mr.
24 Chairman. Gentlemen, thanks for testifying
25 today. I guess just a couple things that I'm a

1 little confused on maybe you can help me out.

2 Mr. Hutchinson, you indicated in your
3 testimony, both written and when you gave it
4 out loud, that your main concern is the
5 well-being of the children and their ability to
6 learn academically.

7 MR. HUTCHINSON: Yes, that's correct.

8 REPRESENTATIVE ELLIS: And we applaud
9 you for that. We know that that's always been
10 the mission of the school board association.
11 But you say we're going to suffer, the kids
12 will suffer. That's thrown out there and never
13 really quantified.

14 How are they going to suffer? Are
15 their scores going to go down? Is there proof
16 that because they start after Labor Day that
17 they're not going to score as well on the test?
18 Is there proof that the teachers aren't going
19 to be able to teach as well because we're
20 starting after that? Maybe you can address
21 that.

22 MR. HUTCHINSON: I think one way to
23 answer the question is to consider the fact
24 that, our educational calendar is something
25 that was designed back when we were serving an

1 agrarian society, and we've since moved into an
2 industrial society and from there we've moved
3 into the technology and informational society.
4 And yet, we still have the calendar as based on
5 the fact that students need to be free from
6 educational obligations during the summer
7 months.

8 I don't think that any educators that
9 would design an educational calendar today from
10 scratch would say that we should push kids
11 through for 10 months and then take two months
12 off and then they forget everything they've
13 learned in the previous 10 months. And you
14 know that's often the case getting students
15 back up to speed in many grades in September.

16 So what I'm saying is that, as you
17 consider the different needs for education, for
18 the future generation of the students as soon
19 as they're in school now, that this kind of
20 calendar that we have we may need to develop
21 some flexible -- to allow school districts to
22 have flexibility in changing their calendar and
23 say, well, what's going to work best for our
24 students. To mandate something to say, well,
25 this will be set in stone probably is not going

1 to serve our students that well in the future.

2 REPRESENTATIVE ELLIS: Okay, thank
3 you. The school district you represent and
4 you've taken in consideration Penn State --

5 MR. HUTCHINSON: That's right.

6 REPRESENTATIVE ELLIS: -- like you
7 testified, when did you start this year?

8 MR. HUTCHINSON: This current year we
9 actually started the Thursday before Labor Day.
10 The next year we'll start after Labor Day, so
11 we've gone back and forth, somewhat depending
12 upon when Labor Day falls.

13 REPRESENTATIVE ELLIS: And, generally,
14 when do you finish?

15 MR. HUTCHINSON: About the second
16 week of June.

17 REPRESENTATIVE ELLIS: If I can just
18 ask one more, Mr. Chairman, or actually, to
19 make a point to Mr. Hopp. I sit on the board
20 of trustees for the Butler County Community
21 College, and we definitely have a lot of
22 enrollment from high school students
23 immediately after graduation. But, we have the
24 ability to set the calendar for that as well.

25 You use examples of dates that are

1 set based on the fact that school districts are
2 going to be done before college starts. If we
3 did implement this and there was a later finish
4 of high school, the colleges wouldn't want to
5 take the hit of losing 10 or 15 percent of
6 their students. They would adjust their
7 calendars. The market will take care of that
8 problem. So, I believe bringing that up is
9 probably a false argument at this point.

10 MR. HOPP: I would suggest, sir, that
11 it cuts both ways; is that, the discretion that
12 the community colleges have and to apply their
13 common sense also exists for the school boards.
14 And that, we can see what are the needs of our
15 community and to see what industries serve our
16 community and apply our common sense to make
17 sure our students are available if needed.

18 MR. LaCOFF: Representative Ellis, if
19 I might, I think your example is an important
20 one to show that this is an issue of community
21 choice. In your combined community this is
22 something that you obviously can work out. You
23 can change your date, perhaps, they can change
24 their date, depending on what the rest of the
25 districts in their IU are. That's the

1 strongest point we're trying to make; is that,
2 501 school districts have 501 issues. And it
3 should be an issue of community choice for what
4 is best for their community and work it out
5 inside of their community.

6 We all make those choices, inside
7 schools and in your home life. My children and
8 grandchildren rush to Dutch Wonderland and
9 Hershey Park the last week before school. If
10 there were two days less of school, would they
11 go two more times? They wouldn't do that.
12 They might go a day later. But, we make those
13 choices.

14 When our schools open, you know,
15 we're going to be ready for our kids and we're
16 going to give them the best education we can.
17 It's not the same in the school district right
18 next door to me.

19 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: We have three
20 other members who want to ask questions. I
21 would advise the members and the responders to
22 keep their answers and questions limited.
23 Representative Moul.

24 REPRESENTATIVE MOUL: Thank you, Mr.
25 Chairman. Thank you, gentlemen, for being here

1 today. I'll just make this very, very brief.

2 Mr. LaCoff, you had said that you
3 started a couple days before the Labor Day
4 holiday, but you still granted a four-day
5 holiday weekend. But one of the things you
6 failed to mention is that, most families, most
7 working-class families that I know, anyway,
8 they don't vacation from the middle of the week
9 to middle of the week. Their industries allow
10 them to take Monday through Friday.

11 I'm failing to see what good it does
12 a family to come to my district, which is
13 Gettysburg, the number 1 tourist district in
14 Pennsylvania, by the way.

15 MR. LaCOFF: Representative, if I can
16 interrupt, I moved a conference from our
17 organization to Gettysburg and we're looking
18 forward to that.

19 REPRESENTATIVE MOUL: I welcome you.

20 MR. LaCOFF: Live up to it, please.

21 REPRESENTATIVE MOUL: Thank you for
22 that.

23 MR. LaCOFF: Make we look good.

24 REPRESENTATIVE MOUL: I will
25 certainly do so, and I'll be there on your

1 behalf.

2 But the bottom line is, families
3 don't want to vacation for Monday and Tuesday,
4 then run come back home to where it is, Erie or
5 any other part of the state, several hours
6 away, and then come back again to finish it up
7 four days later. They want to take their
8 week's vacation Monday through Friday. And to
9 slice these couple days out of the middle of
10 that week is cheating those families, and the
11 revenue that we have the potential of gaining,
12 which sustains our school systems.

13 Therefore, I kind of disagree with
14 the argument that, well, we're giving them that
15 three or four days right after we bring them
16 back home for a couple days, it doesn't work.

17 MR. LaCOFF: Representative, please
18 remember the thrust of the example. That was
19 an abnormality for us. That's not what we
20 usually do, and maybe it wasn't best for our
21 community; maybe it wasn't best for Gettysburg
22 tourism. We didn't do it again.

23 REPRESENTATIVE MOUL: And for you,
24 yes, maybe for you. But what about all the
25 other school districts that it is a normal

1 thing to start a couple days before Labor Day?

2 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Thank you very
3 much. Representative Haluska.

4 REPRESENTATIVE HALUSKA: Thank you,
5 Mr. Chairman.

6 Mr. Hutchinson, one of the things you
7 said sort of caught me off guard. Professors
8 at Penn State, do they have a work-class load
9 throughout the year even when session -- Summer
10 session, obviously, at State College is pretty
11 late. And you said that you set your schedule
12 at State College High School to accommodate
13 these professors that have children in school
14 because they want to go on spring break with
15 their kids. That --

16 MR. HUTCHINSON: The reality of the
17 matter is, because of the spring break and,
18 therefore -- It's not an official holiday for
19 Penn State, but for people employed, professors
20 and other staff that work there, it's a time
21 when they can take vacation. Because they can
22 take vacation, it becomes an opportunity for a
23 family vacation for them, skiing, or wherever
24 it is they go in March. So, therefore, we lose
25 a lot of students.

1 We actually had, a recent example is,
2 because of the heavy weather we had one year,
3 we had to push several snow days into the
4 spring break. What we found out from that is,
5 we had a very high absenteeism for those couple
6 of days because of the very reasons I cited.

7 REPRESENTATIVE HALUSKA: I find that
8 hard to believe that they would do that;
9 utilize that as a vacation and they can't wait
10 until summer to go on a family vacation so they
11 take advantage of that and, you know, interrupt
12 your school calendar.

13 The other thing is, I heard no
14 discussions about the length of the school day.
15 You know, everybody seems to be pressed in a
16 week, got to go this many days. Has anybody
17 ever at the school boards association, or
18 anything, ever talk about the length of the
19 school day?

20 MR. LaCOFF: It's a topic of constant
21 discussion. It's a topic that's discussed at
22 negotiation table with teachers unions all the
23 time. I have a personal prejudice that says a
24 whole day is better than adding a few minutes
25 to each day.

1 The evidence from all over the world,
2 as we mentioned earlier, the agrarian calendar
3 we use may not be the best way. We may be
4 driven in the future to go to year-round
5 schooling. So adding a few minutes to the day
6 may be helpful, but it's not the same as having
7 full days. But yes, it is an issue of
8 discussion.

9 REPRESENTATIVE HALUSKA: And the only
10 other one comment I have, when you said every
11 501 school districts should make up their own
12 mind when they start their calendars, well,
13 municipalities have the elections when we tell
14 them to have elections; you pay taxes when the
15 federal government tells you to pay your taxes
16 by.

17 So, I think something like this that
18 has such a tremendous impact on Pennsylvania, I
19 think it's something that the legislature
20 should look at if we start school after Labor
21 Day to make it uniform because, as Mr.
22 Hutchinson said, one year State College starts
23 three or four days before Labor Day, the next
24 year they start after Labor Day. There's no
25 consistency there, so these businesses really

1 have a problem --

2 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: We have to --

3 REPRESENTATIVE HALUSKA: -- getting
4 their employees. Okay, Mr. Chairman.

5 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: I'm sorry, Gary.
6 We just have to move on. Representative
7 Millard for the last question.

8 REPRESENTATIVE MILLARD: Thank you,
9 Mr. Chairman, and members for testifying here
10 today. Just a few comments that I'd like to
11 offer. And with my apologizes, Mr. Chairman,
12 I'll have to be leaving here very shortly for
13 something else that affects the school
14 calendar, or at least the school, and that is
15 appropriations possibly concerning the budget.

16 But, I do have a superintendent from
17 my school district who will be testifying here
18 in just a few moments, and I want to throw my
19 support behind his testimony in advance.

20 But I think that out of your
21 testimony, gentlemen, if you all agree, the big
22 comment here is, not one glove here fits all.
23 That each school district does, indeed, face
24 individual challenges within the community, and
25 that the needs of the community have to be met

1 individually concerning those circumstances.
2 And I just want to make that point that we're
3 probably all in agreement with that on this
4 panel.

5 And again, to allude to the fact that
6 I've got a superintendent from Bloomsburg who
7 is going to emphasize one of those needs and
8 some other issues related to that.

9 Mr. Chairman, just one advance
10 question here, that I won't be here to hear,
11 but we're going to have the president of the
12 state association of county fairs testify. My
13 question to him in advance would be, how many
14 fairs start after Labor Day, and how many are
15 in agreement with the feeling of the state
16 association of county fairs.

17 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: You're welcome.
19 Thank you. Gentlemen, thank you very much for
20 your testimony. It was very informative.

21 Our next panel is made up of Larry
22 Krome, President, Pennsylvania State
23 Association of County Fairs; John Kiesendahl,
24 owner of Woodloch Pine Resort and Springs, Pike
25 County; and Charlie Groff, Chairman, Government

1 Affairs Committee, Pennsylvania Golf Course
2 Owners Association.

3 Gentlemen, please take your seats,
4 and we'll proceed as we have with the other
5 panels. And whoever wants to go first may
6 proceed.

7 Before I do that, our staff has found
8 out as a result of Chairman Nailor's question,
9 out of 493 school districts that responded to a
10 survey, 410 start their school year before
11 Labor Day, 83 percent. You may proceed, and
12 identify yourself.

13 MR. GROFF: Good morning, my name is
14 Charlie Groff. I'm owner of Groff's Farm Golf
15 Club, a public daily-fee golf course located in
16 Mount Joy, Lancaster County. I'm also the
17 chair of the Government Affairs Committee of
18 the Pennsylvania Golf Course Owners
19 Association, known as the PGO.

20 Thank you for the opportunity to
21 appear before you to voice the PGO's strong
22 support of House Bill 258, which would require
23 school districts, under most circumstances, to
24 begin their school year no later (sic) than the
25 day after Labor Day. We comment Representative

1 Godshall for introducing this legislation and
2 applaud the committee for holding this public
3 hearing.

4 There are roughly 800 public and
5 private golf course and practice facilities in
6 Pennsylvania. The PGO represents public
7 daily-fee and private courses, as well as
8 resort venues and practice facilities such as
9 driving ranges. From family-owned businesses
10 where parents first teach their children the
11 game, to the past and future host of the United
12 States Open, the members of the PGO reflect the
13 full range of facilities that make up the golf
14 industry in Pennsylvania.

15 PGO courses are dependable
16 contributors to the local economies where they
17 are located. The Pennsylvania golf industry is
18 responsible for tens of thousands of jobs
19 statewide and helps neighboring businesses
20 generate millions of dollars in off-course
21 sales. As an amenity often sought by companies
22 looking to locate their facilities, golf
23 courses provide area economic development
24 agencies with an important tool in their
25 efforts to attract and retain top businesses.

1 In addition, golf courses, and the
2 open space they provide, are a tremendous
3 environmental resource. While the boundaries
4 of some courses blend quickly into rolling
5 farmland, others represent the only substantial
6 green space in areas of heavy and continuing
7 development.

8 When it comes to Pennsylvania
9 tourism, PGO members are a key reason why
10 thousands make the Commonwealth their family
11 vacation destination each year. Most, if not
12 all, of the Pennsylvania's visitor and
13 convention bureau websites, including the
14 Commonwealth's own visit PA dot com, contain
15 links to our member courses. It's easy to
16 understand why. Golf has the real potential to
17 enhance a visitor's experience, length of stay
18 and overall spending.

19 Before I share our reasons for
20 backing House Bill 258, I would like to take
21 note that the PGO recognizes the important
22 responsibility school districts have in
23 educating our children, and we appreciate the
24 scheduling challenges they face. We do not
25 support reduction of the number of school days.

1 Our view, however, is that there is
2 ample time between Labor Day and late May,
3 early June to complete the school calendar as
4 required by state law. Doing so will benefit
5 Pennsylvania tourism, and all the industries
6 related to it that generate substantial tax
7 revenues that help fund education in the
8 Commonwealth.

9 As with other tourism industries that
10 support the passage of House Bill 258, the PGO
11 believes this legislation is virtually
12 important to the golf and tourism industries
13 for two reasons. First, it will enable
14 Pennsylvania families to continue their
15 recreational travel until the beginning of
16 September.

17 And second, a post-Labor Day start
18 will allow young people who not only enjoy
19 their summer employment opportunities, but also
20 play a vital role in the day-to-day operations
21 of golf courses and other venues to remain in
22 place until the traditional end of summer
23 season.

24 Unlike other states that are home to
25 a large number of golf-related businesses such

1 as product manufacturing or professional
2 service companies, almost 90 percent of the
3 revenues generated in Pennsylvania's golf
4 industry come directly from the rounds played
5 or time spent at stand-alone practice
6 facilities.

7 With roughly 15 percent of
8 Pennsylvania's golf population being between
9 the ages of 5 and 19, and another 45 percent
10 being their parents' age, the widely-held
11 practice of starting school in early August has
12 had a tremendously negative impact on course
13 revenues. We estimate that moving the start
14 date of the school year until after Labor Day
15 will result in tens of thousands of more rounds
16 at Pennsylvania courses, generating millions of
17 dollars in additional revenues.

18 Those additional rounds will continue
19 to rise if courses are able to retain their
20 summer help through the end of the season. PGO
21 member courses employ thousands of seasonal
22 employees throughout Pennsylvania who are
23 vitally important to the long-term success and
24 stability of those courses that hire them.
25 From providing top-notch service in our

1 restaurants to maintaining the most important
2 aspects of our facilities, the young people who
3 enjoy summer employment with golf courses gain
4 valuable work experience and play a major role
5 in our overall success.

6 Giving them those extra weeks at the
7 end of the summer will be a win-win for
8 everyone; making sure our courses remain
9 valuable tourism attractions in all the regions
10 of the Commonwealth.

11 While some may view golf simply as an
12 activity for the well-to-do, the fact is that,
13 most PGO facilities are small businesses, not
14 unlike the other companies that make up a
15 community's local economy. Beyond their local
16 impact, these small businesses are a vital
17 component to the multibillion-dollar tourism
18 industry in this Commonwealth.

19 Enacting the provisions of House Bill
20 258 is an important step to make sure the golf
21 industry remains a vibrant part of
22 Pennsylvania's multi-faceted tourism economy.
23 And, it will put us on equal footing with other
24 golf-rich states, such as Michigan and Virginia
25 that already require to start school after

1 Labor Day.

2 Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the
3 Pennsylvania Golf Course Owners Association, I
4 want to thank you for the opportunity to
5 provide this testimony on this critically
6 important legislation.

7 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Thank you, Mr.
8 Groff. Before the next testifier, I just want
9 to recognize Representative Pallone from
10 Westmoreland County who has joined us.

11 Whoever is next, you may proceed.

12 MR. KIESENDAHL: Good morning, and
13 thank you for the opportunity to testify today
14 on behalf of the Post-Labor Day school opening.
15 My name is John Kiesendahl. I'm a business
16 owner, hospitality business owner. I'm also a
17 school board director for the past 25 years. I
18 have seven children and four grandchildren, so
19 I'm well vested in this topic. I'm going to
20 weave in my personal background with my
21 testimony.

22 I'm the owner and CEO of Woodloch
23 Pines, Incorporated. My company has several
24 different divisions, most notably the resort,
25 Woodloch Pines, which is a year-round,

1 full-service, American-Plan resort in the Lake
2 Region of the Pocono Mountains. The resort was
3 started by my dad, Harry Kiesendahl, in 1958 as
4 a small summer boarding house accommodating
5 30 guests with a summer staff of four
6 year-round employees and six high school
7 students.

8 Although we had humble beginnings,
9 today the resort accommodates over a thousand
10 guests and has been recognized by both Better
11 Homes and Gardens and Parents Magazine as one
12 of the finest family resorts in America.

13 In addition to Woodloch Pines Resort,
14 our company has developed and owns Woodloch
15 Springs, a beautiful recreational community of
16 402 homes surrounding a championship golf
17 course and an indoor/outdoor recreational
18 center.

19 Another hospitality division of our
20 corporation is a very popular 150-seat
21 restaurant, The Boat House, located on the
22 shores of Lake Wallenpaupack in nearby Hawley.
23 Our primary business market is families from
24 the greater New York area; however, we draw
25 business from a six-hour radius.

1 And although our main focus is on
2 family travel, we also have a growing
3 off-season corporate and group business. In
4 2006, we had sales of \$46 million and a payroll
5 of 14.2 million.

6 Finally, Woodloch Pines is a partner
7 in the lodge at Woodloch, A Destination Spa.
8 This is a sister property which opened
9 midsummer of 2006 with a total project cost of
10 \$40 million. It is the first Destination Spa
11 to be built in America in the past 10 years.
12 It has already been hailed as one of the top
13 100 spas in the world by Conde Nast.

14 The lodge will be operated by a staff
15 of 200, but a potential for 25 high school
16 student positions. For further information on
17 our company history, I've given each of you a
18 packet and give you a little background on our
19 company and maybe you'll be interested in a
20 vacation some day. Come to the beautiful
21 Pocono Mountains. Mario, all right?

22 Woodloch Pines is truly a family-
23 owned business.

24 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Mario Scavello
25 always tells us --

1 MR. KIESENDAHL: Okay. You've got to
2 come and join us.

3 Woodloch is a family-owned business.
4 In 1981 I purchased the business from my dad.
5 For the past 25 years my brother and I have
6 directed the day-to-day operations, and we
7 provide the leadership for its growth.
8 Currently, my four sons are actively involved
9 in the operation of our resort and other
10 enterprises. They each plan to carry on the
11 family business tradition.

12 All of Woodloch's properties are
13 blessed with the abundant natural beauty of the
14 Lake Region of the Pocono Mountains. Add to
15 this the beauty our great food, immaculate
16 housekeeping, and a myriad of activities,
17 entertainment, and a social program that is
18 unsurpassed.

19 However, the key to Woodloch's
20 success for the past 50 years has been the
21 enthusiasm, concern, and sincere, warm
22 personalized hospitality of our exceptional
23 staff. Our company has a year-round staff of
24 700, and during the summer season we employ
25 over 900 very dedicated individuals. Included

1 in this number are 120 high school students who
2 are critical to our operation; moreover, they
3 love to work at Woodloch.

4 Woodloch is the largest employer in
5 both Pike and Wayne counties. And one of our
6 proudest achievements was to be named in 2005
7 as the number 1 best place to work in the
8 entire state of Pennsylvania by The Great Place
9 to Work Institute.

10 In addition to my business interest,
11 I'm involved in many civil organizations. Most
12 importantly, for today's testimony, I have
13 served for the past 25 years as a school board
14 director for the Wallenpaupack Area School
15 District. The combination of my business
16 experience and association with our area school
17 system I believe uniquely qualifies me as a
18 very credible witness for today's testimony.

19 The need for post-Labor Day school
20 opening legislation is critical for the tourism
21 and attractions industry. In our industries,
22 the week before Labor Day is consistently one
23 of the busiest weeks of the year. Children's
24 camps are closed and many families take their
25 traditional summer vacation just before Labor

1 Day.

2 Combine this busy week with a very
3 tight labor market and the loss of valuable and
4 productive high school students, who have been
5 trained and now have the experience of the
6 summer under their belt, and you can understand
7 the tremendous burden on businesses to service
8 their guests and customers properly.

9 At times the labor shortage is so
10 severe that during this potentially very busy
11 period, some businesses accept fewer
12 reservations, knowingly reducing their
13 business, and some actually close during this
14 potentially profitable period. This is
15 particularly damaging in an industry that is so
16 dependent on its summer season.

17 More often, because of financial
18 pressure, businesses do their best to service
19 their guests and customers by adding hours and
20 responsibilities to their remaining staff.
21 This choice is wrought with pitfalls. The end
22 of this very busy season is a difficult time to
23 ask more of your staff, as they are already
24 worn from a busy summer and have been filling
25 in for the college students who have returned

1 to work (sic) in mid-August, and the high
2 school varsity athletes who begin their fall
3 season with all-day practices at approximately
4 the same time, mid-August.

5 Asking the year-round staff to add
6 coverage for the high school students who must
7 legally return to school before Labor Day often
8 puts employees over the edge. The result is a
9 remaining staff that is stretched too thin and
10 very stressed, providing inferior service.
11 This, of course, leads to dissatisfied guests
12 and customers and, ultimately, the loss of both
13 present and future business.

14 Both the state and in our area, the
15 Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau, spend
16 millions of dollars to attract tourists. A
17 good vacation experience promotes the return of
18 guests to our area; plus, the potential of
19 their family and friends coming on the
20 recommendation of the happy guest.

21 On the other hand, a disappointing
22 experience will guarantee that the tourist will
23 not return. In addition, they will speak
24 poorly of the property and the area to their
25 family and friends, further damaging the

1 tourism reputation for the property, the area,
2 and the state.

3 As a school board member, each year
4 we approve a school calendar. As a board, we
5 have never seen the merit in changing the
6 traditional post-Labor Day start for school.
7 In our view it is a pro-family decision that
8 benefits everyone. The only credible argument
9 we have heard for an early start is that
10 students will have a few more days of class
11 before the achievement test given in late
12 February, early March. Perhaps, the solution
13 is as simple as moving the testing date back,
14 as in most states, until later in the school
15 year.

16 For your review, I have included the
17 Wallenpaupack Area School District's calendar
18 in your information packet. You'll notice
19 there are seven snow days. We end June 13th,
20 and we do take deer season off also, and we
21 always start after Labor Day. That's why I
22 stay on the school board.

23 I recognize that all school
24 districts, Wallenpaupack's included, cherish
25 and guard their independence, and we all do,

1 from state and federal government interference.
2 However, the economic importance of the tourism
3 and attractions industries, although the second
4 largest industry in our state, with revenues of
5 \$25.7 billion in travel expenditures, is often
6 not understood or recognized.

7 Just going off of this for a moment.
8 If we were the steel industry or if we were
9 some other industry, there would be no
10 question. But tourism somehow doesn't get
11 looked at by many people as an industry. They
12 don't see it that way.

13 Many school boards are not cognizant
14 of the impact our industries have on their
15 local real estate taxes or state revenues.
16 Plus, they fail to consider the need for many
17 high school students to earn money during the
18 summer season. And perhaps, most importantly,
19 school boards need to focus on the life lessons
20 and practical education learned from the
21 student's summer employment.

22 Deviating again, I can tell you that
23 the high school students that we have working
24 at Woodloch, and we have been doing this since
25 1958, they get a tremendous education. It's a

1 real loss if we had to lose them by the end of
2 Labor Day.

3 Two other things I heard earlier,
4 there is a lot of pressure on school boards and
5 the educational system because of the testing,
6 tremendous pressure. It seems like each
7 school -- The quality of the school is
8 determined by how we do on those tests. So,
9 there's a lot of pressure to start school early
10 to get more days under our belt for the
11 testing.

12 But as was mentioned earlier by
13 Chairman Godshall, there's not an even playing
14 field. And if we go with that philosophy,
15 schools will be opening earlier and earlier to
16 do better and better on the tests. It seems to
17 me we need to, perhaps, move the testing date
18 back and have all the schools start on the same
19 day so there would be a very level playing
20 field. It just seems logical to me, and it
21 seems logical from most of the people that I've
22 spoken to on school boards in our area.

23 All this concern about starting
24 school a few days early may seem
25 inconsequential to many people, but it is

1 critical to the vitality and financial
2 stability of the tourism and attractions
3 industries.

4 The state, too, has a significant
5 stake in this decision. According to the
6 Pennsylvania Budget and Finance Committee
7 report released in September of '06,
8 Pennsylvania's economy could grow by
9 \$400 million if school started after Labor Day.

10 When you are reviewing this
11 testimony, I trust the House Tourism and
12 Recreational Development Committee will find
13 the compelling issues discussed worthy of your
14 favorable consideration, and the legislation
15 will be passed supporting a post-Labor Day
16 school opening. Thank you for the opportunity
17 to speak before you today.

18 One other comment. I heard someone
19 mention about all the contentious issues that
20 we have on school boards to deal with, and
21 there are many. This seems to be one that we
22 could take off the plate and make it even for
23 everyone, and this is a good starting date.
24 This seems to be a great thing for school
25 boards in general. Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Thank you.

2 MR. KROME: Mr. Chairman, good
3 morning to you and the rest of your committee.
4 My name is Larry Krome, and I'm the current
5 president of the Pennsylvania State Association
6 of County Fairs. The purpose of this
7 voluntary, nonprofit educational organization
8 is to promote the growth and improvement of
9 agricultural fairs, associations and societies,
10 and provide for the exchange of information
11 between the membership, general public and all
12 agencies within the Commonwealth of
13 Pennsylvania.

14 I thank you for giving me this
15 opportunity to speak to you regarding the
16 starting of schools after Labor Day. Our
17 association has no problem with Pennsylvania's
18 educational system as a whole. However, there
19 is an area of concern, and that is the practice
20 of starting school before Labor Day.

21 I remember growing up as a child,
22 plus, my own children, that school started the
23 day after Labor Day. This was the normal
24 procedure for schools for decades. Now, for
25 some unknown reason, school must start before

1 Labor Day.

2 Several of our member fairs have
3 expressed the hardship it has put on them since
4 this practice started. This not only puts a
5 burden on the fair, but also on community
6 activities, its families, businesses, civic
7 groups. It cuts into the length of summer,
8 thus, having less time for family functions
9 such as children being with their grandparents,
10 aunts and uncles, vacations, and even summer
11 jobs. In other words, it has a ripple-down
12 effect.

13 Students who exhibit at fairs have
14 problems getting their exhibits entered due to
15 start times and dates of the various fairs. A
16 lot of students who exhibit, especially in
17 livestock, stay at the fair taking care of
18 their animals, showing the animals, and
19 participating in the housekeeping segment of
20 their respected class.

21 This teaches the student
22 responsibility and gives them the opportunity
23 to earn money. These students are usually
24 available for questions from the fair patrons
25 as they take care of the various chores that

1 are associated with their animals.

2 Education is not only found in the
3 classroom. Pennsylvania's number 1 industry is
4 agriculture, so where better can one learn than
5 at a local fair. It not only educates the fair
6 patron, but also the student through vision and
7 participation. It shows the students where the
8 milk or eggs come from. Some students see this
9 for the very first time.

10 Last year, 2006, the Pennsylvania
11 Department of Agriculture reported six million
12 people attended Pennsylvania fairs, many of
13 them being students. With the earlier starts,
14 we have seen various fairs' patronage, revenues
15 and participation drop off during the school
16 hours. This not only hurts the fair, but it
17 also hurts the carnival, your nonprofit groups
18 and for-profit groups. In short, everyone
19 suffers.

20 Take your nonprofit groups, for
21 example. With the school in session, the
22 fair's attendance is off. Less people mean
23 lost revenues for the stands. A problem is,
24 usually your local organizations have earmarked
25 some of their profits for scholarships at the

1 schools. This shortfall in revenue makes it
2 harder for them to meet their goals.

3 Also, some of these nonprofits use
4 the fair as their only source of fundraising.
5 For some reason, when school starts after Labor
6 Day, all activities do better. I think it's
7 the idea that summer is over and now it's time
8 to get back to everyday living.

9 With the earlier start of schools,
10 teachers who want to get advanced degrees must
11 now work towards the goal a lot longer,
12 primarily due to the fact they cannot take the
13 extra course that is necessary for the advanced
14 degree because of the shortened school term
15 which, in turn, causes them added expense.

16 Staying on the earlier starts, it
17 creates a manpower problem, not only for the
18 fair, but for your local fire companies,
19 churches and civic organizations, just to name
20 a few. It's hard enough to get personnel when
21 everything is running smoothly, but it is even
22 harder when you take some of the available work
23 force away.

24 A lot of students and teachers count
25 on a full summer to earn extra money that many

1 rely on.

2 On a final note, I have read that
3 many of the school teachers and even some
4 directors have stated that schools should open
5 after Labor Day. Teachers have personally told
6 me it is a waste of time and money to start
7 before Labor Day. The students are just not
8 interested. They know they are in school for
9 three or four days and then they have Labor Day
10 vacation.

11 In closing, having schools start
12 after Labor Day not only helps keep a viable
13 work force for your local businesses or civic
14 organizations, but also lets families have the
15 full summer to plan for their family functions.

16 I thank you for the opportunity to
17 speak today, and I'll be happy to answer any
18 questions.

19 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Thank you,
20 gentlemen, very much. Chairman Nailor.

21 REPRESENTATIVE NAILOR: I just want a
22 couple points here. First of all, my wife and
23 I have vacationed at Woodloch Pines and had an
24 enjoyable vacation. We loved it. It's
25 beautiful.

1 MR. KIESENDAHL: Thank you.

2 REPRESENTATIVE NAILOR: Secondly,
3 this Pocono legislator back here is working
4 hard today and it's his birthday.

5 (Several people respond "happy
6 birthday" simultaneously).

7 REPRESENTATIVE NAILOR: And John, I
8 think you made a valuable point, and others
9 have mentioned it as well, about the timing of
10 the testing.

11 MR. KIESENDAHL: Yes.

12 REPRESENTATIVE NAILOR: If that can
13 really be something, and Chairman Tangretti
14 suggested that we may want to talk to the folks
15 in education to see if there's anything we can
16 do there to help both sides of this issue maybe
17 work it out. I just -- That's valuable
18 information.

19 I want to thank you, thank all you of
20 you for testifying. Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Representative
22 Pallone.

23 REPRESENTATIVE PALLONE: Thank you,
24 Mr. Chairman.

25 One of my other committee assignments

1 is the Education Committee. Interestingly
2 enough, there's considerable debate on the
3 testing concepts in and of themselves. There
4 are some issues related to that, anyway.

5 With that being said, as a member of
6 the Education Committee, I've had the
7 opportunity to travel throughout Pennsylvania
8 and visit with a number of different schools
9 and school districts, both the secondary level,
10 elementary, middle school and even some of the
11 colleges and universities. We have an
12 extremely fantastic education program in
13 Pennsylvania.

14 I think Mr. Krome has kind of hit the
15 nail square on the head. When you catch --
16 When you're taking a tour of a school building
17 and you're talking to the faculty members,
18 they'll tell you off the record -- They
19 certainly don't want to be quoted or anything.
20 But they'll tell you that with school starting
21 three or four days before Labor Day, it really
22 isn't effective; that they basically bring them
23 in, maybe distribute some books and itineraries
24 for the year and syllabus, or whatever, but
25 they really don't go into anything with any

1 again having the opportunity to travel around
2 the state, we've learned from the agricultural
3 community, and it would kind of go hand in
4 glove with your fairs, that the agricultural
5 community has a history of a fall harvest, or
6 an early fall harvest, if you will.

7 And we've even learned, again, in
8 discussing it with teachers in some of the more
9 rural communities that the families don't even
10 send their kids to school until after Labor Day
11 because, quite frankly, they're home working
12 the farms.

13 While we look at this from a very
14 practical point of view -- And I certainly
15 don't want to be labeled as the person who has
16 handed down a mandate for the school district.
17 This is not a mandate at all. This is a
18 directive that says, let's help all of
19 Pennsylvania, not -- Let's look at a more
20 global approach.

21 I appreciate all of you folks coming
22 in and testifying today. I certainly support
23 the initiative that Representative Godshall has
24 offered. I've supported it in the past. When
25 we look at it from a very global point of view,

1 it's not just the leisure time industry that
2 we're helping here. We're helping all of the
3 businesses in Pennsylvania, we're helping to
4 support all of the families in Pennsylvania,
5 and we need to look at it from a full point of
6 view.

7 And I do appreciate that and look
8 forward to, hopefully, moving this along the
9 way. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Thank you, John.
11 Any other members? Representative Samuelson.

12 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: Yes, my
13 questions is for Mr. Kiesendahl.

14 MR. KIESENDAHL: You have the book in
15 hand. That's a good start.

16 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: I do have
17 page 49 open.

18 A VOICE: I like that orange jacket.

19 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: Where's
20 the orange jacket?

21 Actually, my question concerns your
22 service on the school board. You brought up
23 the topic of moving the PSSA test a little bit
24 later --

25 MR. KIESENDAHL: Yes.

1 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: -- if you
2 had that opportunity. My understanding is,
3 you're limited by the Department of Education
4 when you can offer that test.

5 MR. KIESENDAHL: That's correct.
6 There's a window that starts, I believe the end
7 of February and goes into early March. The
8 testing takes place in that period. So, there
9 is pressure to start earlier and get a few more
10 days under your belt, because everyone is --
11 Those are the dates, I believe that's what
12 it -- But there's a lot of pressure.

13 When we get our grades it's in the
14 paper, everywhere. And every school is marked
15 according to that, and No Child Left Behind, it
16 all ties together. So, there's tremendous
17 testing pressure. And everyone --

18 Unfortunately, the teachers now are
19 testing -- are teaching to the test. It's just
20 what's happening. And someone mentioned this
21 is something to look at. That's what the
22 motivation is, because everyone is graded. And
23 we're a quality school, that's determined how
24 well we do on the test.

25 Unfortunately, I think it isn't

1 necessarily the best education for the young
2 people, but that's the way it's going. So
3 there's pressure to move earlier I can see.

4 If 88 percent of the schools start
5 before Labor Day, that amazed me, that amazed
6 me, that number. That's really a big issue, a
7 tremendous issue. If we can move that testing
8 back, I think would be terrific.

9 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: Once
10 again, my thought is, we should have some
11 discussions with the Department of Education on
12 that.

13 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: That's a good
14 idea. Representative Scavello.

15 REPRESENTATIVE SCAVELLO: Thank you,
16 Mr. Chairman.

17 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Happy birthday,
18 again.

19 REPRESENTATIVE SCAVELLO: Well, thank
20 you, I feel like I'm getting older.

21 (Comment to Representative Scavello;
22 can't hear).

23 REPRESENTATIVE SCAVELLO: No, it
24 doesn't move the date of my birthday.

25 John, while I was back here earlier,

1 there was four or five representatives back
2 here, and I was booking them for your place.

3 MR. KIESENDAHL: Thank you. I jumped
4 at the opportunity to speak today.

5 REPRESENTATIVE SCAVELLO: You know,
6 most of what Representative Pallone has said I
7 agree with totally. It isn't just the resort
8 industry, but it's also those old mom-and-pop
9 shops, the little delis that depend on the
10 tourism in the communities there to survive.
11 That's like their last big weekend before the
12 summer.

13 The Lake Wallenpaupack School
14 District, I talk about it quite often because
15 it's pretty much in the same -- It gets the
16 same type of weather as the Pocono Mountain
17 School District. I'm told that because of the
18 snow season and the snow days that they need to
19 start earlier.

20 However, weather up in the
21 Wallenpaupack School District is a lot worse
22 than Mount Pocono. And yet, you guys start
23 after Labor Day and it seems to work. And I
24 think your school is much better as well, so
25 you're doing something right up there.

1 I don't think those couple of days --
2 I think what Representative Pallone said
3 earlier, those few days really don't make a big
4 difference because you're bringing the students
5 in for a couple of days, then you have a couple
6 of in-service days. Then the kids are away
7 again for another three or four days. They
8 really didn't get enough time for a --

9 I think they just do it to have a day
10 count for a day. Unfortunately, it's not
11 working and it's hurting the industry. I just
12 want you to know that I support the
13 legislation. Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Thank you,
15 Representative Scavello. Any other member?

16 (No response.)

17 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: One quick
18 question. In 30 seconds or less, Mr.
19 Kiesendahl, as a school board member, put that
20 hat on for a second, there's been a lot of talk
21 about the number of built-in days and the
22 length of the day.

23 In your expert opinion, after serving
24 on a school board for 25 years, do you think
25 starting after Labor Day can be effectuated

1 without difficulty in terms of building it into
2 the school year without having to be added on
3 at the end?

4 MR. KIESENDAHL: Yes. First, I don't
5 believe it will affect the quality of the
6 education we provide for our students, which is
7 always primary. We kid around about our
8 business, but it's serious business educating
9 our youth, and these are the people who are
10 going to be our employees. And it can be
11 effectuated. We do it.

12 And I understand every school
13 district has their own individual needs.
14 I do believe, however, that this is one that
15 could be standardized and that would be -- all
16 the rest of the days could be worked out. We
17 do it in our school district, I don't see a
18 reason it can't be done.

19 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Thank you very
20 much.

21 MR. KIESENDAHL: Fully support.

22 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Thank you.
23 Thank you all very much for your testimony.
24 You are excused.

25 Our final panel is Joseph Kelly,

1 Superintendent, Bloomsburg Area School
2 District; Robert A. Frick, Superintendent,
3 Lampeter-Strasburg Area School District;
4 Stinson Stroup, Executive Director,
5 Pennsylvania Association of School
6 Administrators. As you have witnessed with the
7 other panels, please proceed.

8 MR. STROUP: I'm going to begin, Mr.
9 Chairman. I'm Stinson Stroup, Executive
10 Director of the Pennsylvania Association of
11 School Administrators.

12 I think you're getting a copy of my
13 written testimony now. It is very brief. I
14 just want to highlight some of the things that
15 you have already heard; and that is, that every
16 school district is different and every case is
17 different. And many of the issues that you've
18 been discussing have been carefully balanced by
19 the school officials in those communities to
20 come up with the calendars that they have. We
21 would argue that that is a much better solution
22 to the problem than having a single answer that
23 covers all school districts.

24 We've heard about a number of those
25 situations, and we're going to talk very

1 specifically about two other situations. Let
2 me call on Doctor Frick first and then call
3 upon Doctor Kelly.

4 DOCTOR FRICK: Good morning. My name
5 is Robert Frick. I'm Superintendent of Schools
6 in the Lampeter-Strasburg School District in
7 Lancaster County. I want to thank you for
8 permitting me to be part of this event today
9 and to address you on why I am in opposition to
10 House Bill 258, a very unpopular stance I
11 gather this morning so far to be in opposition
12 to it.

13 First, I would like to provide you
14 with some brief background information about my
15 experience in education and about our district.
16 I'm presently completing my 41st year in
17 education, all of which have been in the
18 Lampeter-Strasburg School District. And I've
19 served the district as a teacher,
20 administrative assistant, principal, director
21 of elementary education, assistant
22 superintendent, and for the last 11 years as
23 superintendent of schools. You might say, I
24 can't keep a job.

25 We're a rapidly growing school

1 district of approximately 3400 students. We
2 border the City of Lancaster on the southeast.
3 And as you're aware, Lancaster County is an
4 area popular with tourists because of the many
5 historic sites and our ever-famous Amish
6 population.

7 Many of the adult residents of our
8 district are involved either directly or
9 tangentially in the tourist industry, and a
10 significant number of our high school students
11 work on weekends and during the summer in jobs
12 that are affiliated in some way with the
13 tourist business.

14 Our community is extremely supportive
15 of our schools, extremely supportive, and the
16 district was identified in 1996 by Money
17 Magazine as one of the nation's 100 Top Schools
18 In Towns You Can Afford. The students have for
19 the last 30 years consistently scored
20 significantly above the state and national
21 averages on SATs, and approximately 80 percent
22 of our students go on to advanced schooling
23 after graduation.

24 I'm here to speak, as I said, in
25 opposition to House Bill 258, a piece of

1 proposed legislation that my board and I
2 believe to be further erosion to the concept of
3 local control. This is not a matter of
4 students learning more effectively because
5 they've started several days before Labor Day,
6 or they didn't start several days before Labor
7 Day. Rather, it's about local school boards
8 being able to establish and adopt calendars
9 that they believe are appropriate for their
10 specific circumstances.

11 Having the option of starting school
12 before Labor Day is beneficial to the students,
13 the parents and the faculty of the Lampeter-
14 Strasburg School District for the following
15 reasons:

16 First, while the state requires
17 180 student days, our district has a
18 professional contract with its teachers of
19 191 days, 183 of these days are student days.
20 Historically, beginning school three days
21 before Labor Day has enabled us to end our
22 school year at approximately the same time as
23 those districts with 180-student-day calendars.

24 Second, at this point, PIAA permits
25 school districts to begin fall practices in the

1 middle of August. That is currently two weeks
2 before school starts and three weeks before
3 their first nonscrimmage competition. If
4 school is not permitted to begin until after
5 Labor Day, there will be four weeks of
6 practices and the first competition in all
7 sports before the student body is even back to
8 support those activities.

9 Third, this is Pennsylvania and it
10 snows here. We lose days because of inclement
11 weather each year; how many days, of course,
12 varying from year to year. The shortest number
13 I remember is zero, the largest I remember is
14 13. This past year we lost three days, two of
15 which we had built-in snow days in the
16 calendar.

17 That having been said, Millerville
18 University, where most of our teachers go for
19 their summer courses, is starting summer
20 classes for teaches this year on June 11th; our
21 teachers work through June 12th. If we had
22 started after Labor Day, it would be at least
23 the end of the first week of classes before our
24 teachers could attend.

25 Fourth, our high school operates on a

1 block schedule. In other words, instead of the
2 traditional eight- or nine-period days, as most
3 of you probably attended, and I know I did, our
4 high school students have four periods per day,
5 each one 81 minutes long.

6 An entire subject offering, for
7 example, Algebra I, is covered in a semester
8 and the students have an opportunity to
9 complete four more courses during their high
10 school four years under this format. Because
11 new courses are begun each semester, our
12 teachers believe that there should be a
13 clerical day provided between semesters to end
14 their first-semester courses and prepare
15 adequately for the next set. The board, the
16 administration and I concur.

17 However, this in-between day, or
18 tweener day as it's affectionately called by
19 the teachers, also makes the school year one
20 day longer.

21 Lastly, school does not end for many
22 students when the last day of the year rolls
23 around. Over the last 15 years we've averaged
24 about four students who attend the Governor's
25 School of Excellence, a dozen or more who

1 participate in Amercian Music Abroad, nearly
2 400 who participate in a summer school of
3 enrichment and remediation that we call the
4 Academy at L-S, and several hundred high school
5 and middle schools students who participate in
6 summer sports camps, which have to occur around
7 family vacations.

8 Starting before Labor Day, there's
9 presently limited time between the end of the
10 school year and the start of the fall sports
11 schedules. If we start after Labor Day with
12 all the activities that are going on with our
13 kids returning to school before the start of
14 school, there would even be fewer.

15 In summary, it's my belief that it is
16 our primary responsibility at Lampeter-
17 Strasburg to provide the best educational
18 experience for our students and our community
19 that we can. We do not see it our
20 responsibility to establish our schedule to
21 make our students available as a labor force
22 for any business or industry, including the
23 tourist industry.

24 Because the compulsory school
25 attendance laws of the Commonwealth were

1 established over a hundred years ago to keep
2 children in school and not have them in
3 competition with adults looking for jobs, I
4 find it ironic that the legislature is now
5 considering manipulating the local school
6 calendars by mandate to provide school children
7 as workers for businesses.

8 I thank you for permitting me to make
9 my comments, to share my opinions with you, and
10 I do thank you for all you do for the children
11 of Pennsylvania.

12 DOCTOR KELLY: Good morning. I'm Joe
13 Kelly. I'm the Superintendent of the
14 Bloomsburg School District, and I want to also
15 thank the committee for providing me the
16 opportunity to speak with you this morning.

17 Parenthetically, during the testimony
18 this morning, many people spoke about the
19 180-day school calendar. If in the future --
20 Representative Pallone, if the legislature
21 wished to include discussions about increasing
22 the minimum number of school days, I'd be
23 delighted to be included in those discussions
24 as an advocate, and I think I'm speaking for
25 many superintendents.

1 Perhaps, you are not aware that the
2 Bloomsburg Area School District, as well as the
3 Central Columbia School District in Bloomsburg,
4 and Columbia-Montour Area Vocational Technical
5 School have historically scheduled the fourth
6 week in September, the week of the Bloomsburg
7 Fair, as a school vacation. On school
8 calendars for those three school districts, as
9 well as all other school districts in Columbia
10 and Montour counties, there are days that are
11 built in during that time as holidays for the
12 Bloomsburg Fair.

13 And just as other representatives of
14 industries have pointed out, in Bloomsburg, the
15 Bloomsburg -- excuse me, in Columbia and
16 Montour County, the Bloomsburg Fair is the
17 number 1 tourist attraction in those areas. It
18 employs more than 500 workers. It has
19 800 vendors and that employs thousands of
20 residents of the region, hundreds of whom are
21 students or their parents.

22 Last year the Bloomsburg Fair
23 generated about \$3.4 million in direct revenue
24 during an eight-day period to the area. And
25 when I spoke to Frederick Trump, the president

1 of the Bloomsburg Fair Board, Mr. Trump asked
2 me to pass on his sentiments that the
3 Bloomsburg Fair Board adamantly opposes House
4 Bill 258.

5 As has been pointed out by several
6 people, the reason that we have the current
7 school calendar as it exists now was to fit the
8 agrarian calendar of the early 20th Century.
9 And I do have concerns about changing that
10 calendar only to accommodate another industry.

11 Currently, our school district's
12 calendar permits four weeks of instruction
13 before the fair vacation. If our school
14 district and other area school districts were
15 not permitted to commence the school year until
16 after Labor Day, we'd only have about two or
17 two and a half weeks before -- between the
18 start of school and the start of the Bloomsburg
19 Fair.

20 Because of that, those few
21 instructional days, as superintendent I could
22 not recommend that our school district continue
23 its 100-year tradition of closing during fair
24 week. So, ironically -- Again, ironically,
25 House Bill 258 would hurt the number 1 tourist

1 event in our region

2 And this is very specific to the
3 Bloomsburg School District. Two of our three
4 elementary schools are located in the town of
5 Bloomsburg on direct routes to the Bloomsburg
6 Fair. About 500 yards from the fair thousands
7 of automobiles and pedestrians pass those
8 buildings every day. If the school were in
9 session, I'd be very fearful of the safety
10 implications that would result from holding
11 school during the fair.

12 Now, I've outlined a condition very
13 specific to the Bloomsburg Area School District
14 and the town of Bloomsburg. I'm certain that
15 dozens of similar school districts -- or dozens
16 of similar situations exists throughout the
17 Commonwealth, each peculiar to a single school
18 district or community. Pennsylvania School
19 Code, as it's written now, permits each school
20 district to establish a school calendar to
21 accommodate its local circumstances. And I
22 urge the Pennsylvania legislature to allow the
23 state's 500 school districts to retain local
24 control over their school terms.

25 And I thank you again for this

1 opportunity.

2 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Thank you.
3 Thank you, gentlemen. Mr. Kelly, why would it
4 be necessary to not take the week off?

5 DOCTOR KELLY: Why it would be
6 necessary not to? Yes, sir. Presently, we
7 start very early based on the information that
8 I have heard throughout the morning. We start
9 about the 23rd of August, and that appears to
10 be quite early compared to some other regions
11 of the state.

12 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Only because of
13 the Bloomsburg Fair?

14 DOCTOR KELLY: Yes, sir.
15 Historically --

16 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Just if I may
17 interrupt --

18 DOCTOR KELLY: Sure.

19 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: -- because I
20 want to ask a point of question. If you
21 started after Labor Day and the fair is the
22 third week --

23 DOCTOR KELLY: Fourth week, yes, sir.

24 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: -- fourth week
25 in September --

1 DOCTOR KELLY: Yes, sir.

2 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: -- that would
3 give you a full three weeks prior to the
4 beginning of the fair, essentially?

5 DOCTOR KELLY: It depends on, of
6 course, when Labor Day falls. But, generally,
7 no more --

8 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Two and a half
9 weeks.

10 DOCTOR KELLY: Two and a half weeks,
11 yes, sir.

12 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: And that's
13 difficult from an academic standpoint,
14 instructional standpoint? And it cannot be
15 made up in the rest of the calendar year?

16 DOCTOR KELLY: Yes, sir. It's not a
17 matter of making it up because those
18 opportunities would be able -- We presently
19 close school on June 6, so that is not the
20 problem. This is our only major vacation
21 during the school year other than the week
22 between Christmas and New Year's.

23 The problem would be that beginning
24 after Labor Day we would not have the present
25 20 instructional days, and I would be very

1 concerned about going into school for 10 to
2 12 instructional days, then closing for the
3 entire week, because we had just started.

4 As it was alluded, a day or two are
5 taken up, unfortunately, with the housekeeping
6 details that we have, that would allow about
7 10 instructional days, then a full week off.
8 I'd be very concerned about retention of
9 instruction.

10 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Okay, I
11 understand what you're saying.

12 Members of the committee, questions?
13 Representative Samuelson.

14 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: Thank you.
15 There's been some discussion today about school
16 calendars, public school calendars versus
17 college calendars. I guess the discussion
18 today has been about the end of school in June
19 and the start of college summer classes.

20 My question is more on the relatively
21 new initiative, the dual enrollment that's part
22 of our state budget and actually is proposed
23 for an increase in this year's state budget,
24 where high school seniors can actually take
25 classes at the local college in a program

1 funded in part by the state.

2 My question is, how widely is that
3 utilized? Are students from your districts
4 taking classes at Bloomsburg or Franklin &
5 Marshall? Any kind of statewide perspective on
6 how many students are involved in dual
7 enrollment?

8 MR. STROUP: Yes, sir. We have about
9 half a dozen, eight students at this time that
10 are taking classes either at Franklin &
11 Marshall, Millersville, Harrisburg Area
12 Community College or Lancaster Bible. I
13 wouldn't see the calendar, whether it starts
14 before or after Labor Day, having any
15 significant impact one way or the other.

16 These students are very motivated.
17 If they have to go in the middle of August or
18 not start until the middle of September or go
19 to the middle of June, it's not going to impact
20 upon them because they want the experience of
21 the classes. So I don't think that would have
22 an impact, sir.

23 DOCTOR KELLY: Representative
24 Samuelson, with Bloomsburg being literally two
25 blocks away from the university, we also have a

1 number of students who do participate in
2 dual-enrollment program, 100 percent of those
3 kids with Bloomsburg University. It works out
4 to be a fantastic program for us.

5 Presently, our calendar, the
6 Bloomsburg School District calendar and
7 Bloomsburg University calendar correspond very
8 closely, and that just is not an issue.

9 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: If the
10 public school calendar would change, you're
11 saying that those students -- those high school
12 seniors who want to participate in this would
13 just do that two weeks earlier than their
14 classmates are going back to school?

15 DOCTOR FRICK: That's what I'm
16 saying, sir, yes.

17 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Representative
19 Gabig.

20 REPRESENTATIVE GABIG: Thank you, Mr.
21 Chairman. Thank you, gentlemen. Sorry I was
22 late. We had a Judiciary Committee that
23 Representative Pallone and I were at that's
24 ongoing now. It's hard to be in two places at
25 one time, but this has been extremely helpful

1 to me.

2 I heard one of you say it's not a
3 popular position that you had. To be honest
4 with you, I haven't made up my mind. This is
5 my first year on this committee. I'm not a
6 co-sponsor. I'm listening intensely, to be
7 honest with you, or attentively maybe is a
8 better word, trying to pay attention to
9 arguments on both sides and to make up my mind
10 when I guess we'll be called upon to do so with
11 a vote called by our esteemed chairman.

12 We heard from the prior panel that
13 there's been a change in the traditional start
14 date; that it used to be that the school
15 started after Labor Day, and it's been a recent
16 phenomenon that we're seeing school districts
17 move back before Labor Day. The superintendent
18 from Bloomsburg indicates it's been a
19 hundred-year tradition in his area (mumbled
20 word) that's not true. I was just wondering in
21 Lancaster -- Lampeter, right?

22 DOCTOR FRICK: Lampeter-Strasburg,
23 yes, sir.

24 REPRESENTATIVE GABIG: Strasburg, in
25 Lancaster County. Am I right where that is?

1 DOCTOR FRICK: Yes, sir.

2 REPRESENTATIVE GABIG: Do you agree
3 with that statement that was made, that this is
4 a recent phenomenon to change, or has the
5 earlier start day been a tradition in your
6 school district? And I guess I would ask Mr.
7 Stroup the same question, if you could speak to
8 that on a more statewide basis too, if you
9 understand my question. Thank you, gentlemen.

10 DOCTOR FRICK: Yes. In our district,
11 sir, it's been about 20 years I would guess at
12 this point, primarily initiated because of the
13 increasing number of days that the teachers are
14 employed and that the students are in.

15 Through collective bargaining,
16 professional negotiations, and all that kind of
17 thing, our community is saying, if we're going
18 to be paying significantly more money to
19 teachers, we ought to be getting more service
20 from them. So our school year has increased
21 from 180 days to 183, which just happens to be
22 the number of days we go before Labor Day.

23 Coupled with that, and I think in our
24 district, more of a minor concern, is the
25 number of days we lose to snow because you

1 never know. Some year we might not lose any,
2 and other years we might lose a significant
3 number. But the additional length of the
4 teaching calendar and the students' calendar
5 was the precipitous event that caused it in
6 Lampeter-Strasburg.

7 I would also say that in our
8 intermediate unit, 22 school districts of
9 Lancaster, Lebanon County all start before
10 Labor Day, which fit in with the 83 percent
11 that we were hearing, with the exception of
12 Warwick School District in Lititz. And my
13 understanding is, next year they are starting
14 before Labor Day, but I don't have that as
15 solemn word.

16 MR. STROUP: I think there probably
17 is a statewide trend of adding additional
18 school days, instructional days to the
19 calendar, and that has prompted some districts
20 to start before Labor Day. I think most
21 educators, and Mr. Kelly indicated that in his
22 testimony, would encourage more instructional
23 days and more instructional time for students.

24 And a second factor is, we have moved
25 away from an agrarian economy. And families

1 cannot always take their vacations, or don't
2 always choose to take their vacations in the
3 summer. And there's a lot of pressure in
4 particularly more affluent communities for
5 midyear and spring vacations.

6 And as I think you've heard from the
7 board president from State College, attendance
8 drops off dramatically if they don't
9 accommodate families who want to do that. And
10 one of the ways that schools help structure
11 that opportunity is by saying the spring break
12 is longer than it traditionally used to be, or
13 by saying winter break is longer than it
14 traditionally used to be. And that allows
15 families then to choose to use that time for
16 their vacation.

17 REPRESENTATIVE GABIG: Thank you very
18 much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Just to -- So
20 what you're saying is that you've accommodated
21 additional days of vacation in the spring for
22 those families who expressed, through whatever
23 means, but that the relative difference of that
24 compared to Labor Day is not as important?

25 MR. STROUP: I think every community

1 is making a different balance based upon what
2 their --

3 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: But they have --

4 MR. STROUP: -- families want.

5 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Just so I
6 understand. But they have made the adjustments
7 throughout the school year to provide for the
8 additional days to be made up one way or the
9 other?

10 MR. STROUP: Yes.

11 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Okay.

12 Representative Pallone.

13 REPRESENTATIVE PALLONE: Thank you,
14 Mr. Chairman.

15 While I certainly showed you my cards
16 earlier that I'm most certainly in favor of
17 this House Bill 258, I did learn in high school
18 and even in college in physics that for ever
19 action there's an equal and opposite reaction.
20 You three gentlemen most certainly have offered
21 the opposite reaction to the community of
22 commerce who says this is a good idea.

23 And if I missed this in the earliest
24 testimony, I apologize for the question
25 because, as Representative Gabig said, I was at

1 a Judiciary Committee first.

2 If we're focusing on the Labor Day --
3 after Labor Day start date, and I don't really
4 mean to muddy the waters, but sometimes I do.
5 What about the Memorial Day? Are we concluding
6 after Memorial Day in most or all school
7 districts, or don't you know?

8 DOCTOR FRICK: I can speak for
9 Lancaster-Lebanon IU. I think the first
10 graduation that I saw was Manheim Township
11 School District which is on May 31. That's
12 ungodly early as far as everybody else is
13 concerned. Most of them are 7, 8, 9, 10, in
14 there of June. We graduate on the 8th of June
15 this year.

16 REPRESENTATIVE PALLONE: Then on
17 behalf of the school districts I guess too, I
18 recall when, I'm going to say maybe back in the
19 late '70's when I was in high school, the
20 school district offered a program where they
21 would hire students to do some of the
22 maintenance work, cut the grass--I don't know--
23 paint, things like that. It was traditionally
24 a 10-week offering of summer employment. I
25 don't even know if that still exists in your

1 school districts.

2 Do you know if any schools districts
3 still do that? And how does that 10-week
4 offering of summer employment fit into your
5 scheme of starting before or after Labor Day?

6 DOCTOR KELLY: If I could address
7 that at least in Columbia County, because it is
8 a county-sponsored initiative. I believe it's
9 a state-sponsored initiative, but obviously
10 administered through the county, that work
11 force development program for young people does
12 exist. It has been reduced a bit because of
13 funding, but generally it falls well within the
14 parameters that I've outlined. In fact, it
15 does not begin until about the last week in
16 June, and it does wrap up right before the
17 start of our school year, which is the third
18 week in August.

19 REPRESENTATIVE PALLONE: And I guess
20 my last question or comment would be, I think
21 the genesis of education has changed in the
22 last century, so whether we start before or
23 after Labor Day may or may not be relevant.

24 But I know there's been, again, a
25 number of studies done relative to energy

1 efficiencies of even existing buildings that
2 aren't necessarily green buildings, but there's
3 an economy enjoyed by beginning earlier or
4 later and finishing earlier or later.

5 And I'm wondering if the school
6 districts, and even in adjusting your calendar,
7 if you're looking at energy-savings
8 opportunities to be able to shut down either
9 heating systems or keep air conditioning, the
10 cooling systems at a minimum in terms of your
11 energy savings, energy consumption, which
12 ultimately reflects in your budget, which, I
13 guess 80 or more percent of your budget is
14 primary fixed in terms of overhead expenses and
15 not luxuries. I know that having served on a
16 school board myself.

17 Does that come into play in your
18 calendar as well, or no?

19 DOCTOR FRICK: It doesn't a lot with
20 ours because some of the -- Fortunately,
21 another school district in our county had an
22 experience of doing exactly what you're saying,
23 shutting back air conditioning over the summer,
24 and all that type of thing.

25 What we had -- What they experienced

1 was a tremendous problem with mold, because the
2 way school buildings are now built, you have to
3 keep them certain air tight, the humidity level
4 is there. When the air conditioning is not
5 running at a certain capacity or there aren't
6 kids in the buildings, mold can build up.
7 You've got to shut the schools down when that
8 happens. That's a disaster.

9 So we don't really see the
10 difference -- And, of course, we have a summer
11 school going on on our main campus where
12 85 percent of our kids are. That's in the
13 heart of the summer anyhow. So, I don't really
14 see that as an impact, sir.

15 REPRESENTATIVE PALLONE: Do you have
16 a summer school at all levels or just like --

17 DOCTOR FRICK: Through middle school,
18 through 8th grade.

19 REPRESENTATIVE PALLONE: Eighth grade
20 on --

21 DOCTOR FRICK: Yes, sir.

22 REPRESENTATIVE PALLONE: -- into
23 12th.

24 MR. FRICK: And it's a combination
25 enrichment/remediation depending on what the

1 student needs. Some student could go for
2 remediation and also get enrichment classes.

3 REPRESENTATIVE PALLONE: It's
4 interesting. Thank you. Thank you again,
5 gentlemen, for your remarks. Thank you, Mr.
6 Chairman.

7 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Representative
8 Payne --

9 REPRESENTATIVE PAYNE: Thank you, Mr.
10 Chairman.

11 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: -- for the last
12 question.

13 REPRESENTATIVE PAYNE: I will be
14 brief. Going along with, you said you're
15 taking a very unpopular position today. My
16 question would be, what suggestions would you
17 have to improve the bill because there's
18 certainly a ground swell of support for it?
19 You said it would cause you some undue stress.
20 Would something like an opt-out clause be
21 helpful to you and your school district?

22 DOCTOR KELLY: If I could address it,
23 speaking strictly for myself, the language as
24 it exists now that permits each school district
25 to develop its own calendar based on its unique

1 and specific circumstances is the best remedy.
2 I think as you've heard here, there's a
3 tremendous variety in Pennsylvania, urban,
4 rural. Certainly the west and eastern halves
5 of the Commonwealth are very, very different.

6 When I tell people outside of our
7 immediate area that we close the fourth week in
8 September, they are genuinely surprised. And
9 yet, it is three school districts that close
10 fully and several others partially. That is
11 just a small picture of the diversity in the
12 Commonwealth. So I'm sorry to say, my
13 recommendation would be, boy, the existing
14 language is just great.

15 DOCTOR FRICK: I agree with what Mr.
16 Kelly said. I would just throw one other
17 comment in. If the legislature in its wisdom
18 decides to pass this bill, you'll still get
19 quality education in Pennsylvania.

20 Three days that we start before we
21 feel are significant. We're looking at a very
22 small slice of the pie. Unfortunately, you
23 have to look at the whole state and everything
24 else that enters in there, and we're aware of
25 that. We really are.

1 We thank you for listening to us and
2 at least asking questions that (inaudible word)
3 to clarify.

4 REPRESENTATIVE PAYNE: Thank you very
5 much for your input. I appreciate it. Thank
6 you.

7 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Thank you,
8 gentlemen, very much. It was very informative.

9 Out final witness we have someone who
10 has spent a long time looking at this issue,
11 Tina Bruno, Executive Director, The Coalition
12 for a Traditional School Calendar.

13 MS. BRUNO: Hello.

14 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: San Antonio.

15 MS. BRUNO: Yes.

16 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Thank you very
17 much for coming all this way. You may proceed
18 when you are ready.

19 MS. BRUNO: Honorable Chair, and
20 committee members, I thank you for the
21 opportunity to talk with you today and give you
22 a little bit of a historical idea of the school
23 start date debate, and really a lot of the
24 facts and the data and research that are out
25 there that may give you a little bit more of

1 the knowledge or craving.

2 My name is Tina Bruno. I am the
3 Executive Director of The Coalition for a
4 Traditional School Calendar. I've been
5 studying this issue for 10 years. If somebody
6 would actually make some Trivial Pursuit
7 questions about the school calendar, maybe I'd
8 have a chance of winning. But thus far, it
9 seems to be my little baby.

10 But I do have three girls that all
11 attend public school. And before I even became
12 interested in doing this topic, I spent six
13 months researching the issue before I made up
14 my mind because I wanted to make sure that
15 nothing that I would promote would in any way
16 harm education.

17 This issue of the school calendar and
18 when school should start is often lumped into
19 the education arena, but, in reality, it has
20 nothing to do with academic achievement, and
21 everything to do with fairness, fiscal
22 responsibility and vacations.

23 Regardless of when our children start
24 the school year, they receive the same number
25 of days of instruction. The only difference we

1 see is the number of holidays scheduled between
2 the first and last day of school. And a later
3 school start date doesn't automatically mean a
4 later end date.

5 The school calendar concept was
6 something that, years and years and years ago
7 before urbanization we had what they called the
8 agrarian calendar. That is very different than
9 the post-Labor Day calendar we enjoy today.
10 The post-Labor Day to Memorial Day or beginning
11 of June calendar was actually ushered in when
12 urbanization came to this country. And that's
13 all documented in the extremely fascinating
14 book written by Doctor Kenneth Gold, a
15 university professor at the City University in
16 New York. And if you need some good sleeping
17 material, I can provide you the book or just a
18 one-page synopsis of what he says.

19 But really, the calendar that we're
20 promoting is not the agrarian calendar. It's a
21 calendar that was brought in as our cities
22 began developing and people had -- were
23 realizing that they could take a chunk of time
24 to be able to do things other than work or be
25 in the schools.

1 Research shows that school calendar
2 configurations do not impact academic
3 performance. That credit is due to our
4 fabulous administrators, our very dedicated and
5 talented teachers, our involved parents and our
6 hard-working students. But, August school
7 start dates do reduce tax revenue to the state,
8 and they do increase operational costs for the
9 schools.

10 Personally, I think we should be
11 supporting school calendars that allow
12 businesses to generate as much money as
13 possible for the state, thus, reducing or
14 minimizing the tax burden on individual
15 citizens. Maybe then we would have the funding
16 we need for our school administrators to be
17 able to implement all the wonderful programs
18 that they have in their minds, to give our
19 teachers the resources that they truly need in
20 the classrooms, and maybe provide more teachers
21 and more small-group tutoring for our
22 struggling children.

23 In Pennsylvania we have seen a
24 gradual creep when the school year has begun.
25 It's very gradual. It's a day here and a day

1 there. And that's not something that is just
2 happening in your state. It's happened all
3 over the nation.

4 Unfortunately, the trend doesn't seem
5 to stop with August 23rd. The trend seems to
6 stop at August 1st, July 31st when parents are
7 absolutely up in arms and legislators see
8 seasonal businesses closing their doors, not
9 just for the season, but for good. The economy
10 suffers, and really in the end, our teachers
11 and our students and our schools suffer because
12 they have less money to pull from.

13 But with the immense pressure on
14 school administrators today, who can blame them
15 for trying every trend possible to increase
16 standardized test scores. They have their
17 backs against the wall. The trend to start
18 school year earlier has much to do today with
19 administrators trying to have as many
20 instructional days before the standardized test
21 as possible. And what we've seen is, as
22 standardized testing has increased and more
23 pressure has been put on it, you see the school
24 start dates creep a little more forward each
25 year.

1 But, in reality, is this fair to our
2 students, teachers and administrators?
3 Wouldn't it be fair to provide a common school
4 start date and allow everyone to work from the
5 same starting line? You know, my 12 year old
6 brought up, she said, well, mama, we don't get
7 to pick where we start on the track. We all
8 have the same place when we're racing. And
9 really it is a race to that test.
10 Superintendents have an immense pressure right
11 now.

12 But, we look at fairness and we're
13 looking at fairness on all levels. You know,
14 people talked a lot about sporting teams today.
15 Your football, it's highly regulated. They
16 tell you when you can start, how long your
17 practices can be, when your scrimmages begin
18 and when your first game is played, and they do
19 this to ensure fairness on the field.

20 The standardized test is the one game
21 that every one of our students play. And I
22 think we owe it to them to have an equal
23 starting point, and let the superintendents
24 then decide how they're going to use those days
25 in between. But it's fair for all students.

1 Data, research and test scores show
2 that when you start the school year does not
3 impact academic achievement, nor does it impact
4 the scores on advanced placement testing.
5 Research by internationally-known educator,
6 Doctor Gene V. Glass at Arizona State
7 University, looked over 20 years of research
8 and he came to the conclusion that the school
9 calendar configuration does not impact academic
10 performance in any way, shape or form.

11 He actually found that the only data
12 that exists to show that school calendars do
13 impact academic performance has been bought and
14 paid for by advocacy organizations and was
15 never peer reviewed.

16 One of the top academic states in the
17 nation, according to the American Legislative
18 Exchange Council, is Minnesota. It had a
19 post-Labor Day school start date for many
20 years, and each year the number of student in
21 Minnesota who receive a three or higher on
22 their AP testing has continued to go up. And
23 so, having a later school start date has not
24 impacted their academic achievement. And I
25 talk about AP testing because it's the one test

1 in the nation that's given at the same time
2 nationwide. It doesn't vary by state.

3 Research, data and common sense show
4 us that the school calendar configuration does
5 not impact academic performance. It's not a
6 matter of education; it is a matter of vacation
7 and cost effectiveness.

8 We talked a little bit about the
9 energy efficiency. Tulsa public schools when
10 hit with a budget crisis pushed back their
11 school start date by two weeks. They estimated
12 it would save them \$200,000. In reality, they
13 say that it saved them almost \$500,000 just in
14 that one move alone on their electricity bills.

15 They talk about mold and energy
16 efficiency. But I'm sure you've all had a
17 party at your house, and prior to the party you
18 had your air conditioner set at 70. As soon as
19 you had 20 bodies in your house at 98 point
20 something degrees, the amount of work your air
21 conditioner had to do went up greatly.

22 The same thing happens in our
23 schools. So, when we don't have students in
24 our classroom and we still have our electricity
25 set at 70, the amount of work and the amount of

1 electricity to keep that room at 70 is a lot
2 less then once you start adding students,
3 movement, and doors opening and closing.

4 They talked a little bit about your
5 economist TrippUmbach, and I looked at his
6 research and I compared it to research around
7 the nation to see if I could see any glaring
8 differences or glaring, what I felt were
9 errors, and it really corresponds with what
10 other states are estimating for their revenue
11 lost as well. It's something that's not unique
12 to Pennsylvania.

13 But I thought it was interesting that
14 they said Pennsylvania is losing \$17.7 million
15 in tax revenue for every five days. That means
16 336 new teacher salaries could be funded, or
17 2,832,000 small-group tutoring slots could be
18 funded. That to me -- I think your
19 superintendents could do a lot with that money
20 and be able to actually help our students
21 academically.

22 Teachers and students are losing
23 35.5 million in lost personal income. This was
24 a concern to me because college costs are
25 rising, our kids need the opportunity to earn

1 money. And when you look at teacher trends
2 nationwide, a lot of teachers are leaving the
3 profession because they don't feel they're
4 being paid adequately.

5 Parents are also paying 23 million
6 more in child care; not to mention the fact
7 that the child care available during the school
8 year is greatly different than the child care
9 available during the summer. In summer we can
10 augment what our teachers are doing in the
11 classroom, we can reinforce the value of
12 education in everyday life. And unfortunately,
13 when child care is given at one and two days at
14 a time, it's a lot of kids sitting in front of
15 TV's and movies, which I don't feel have the
16 great academic interest for the kids that they
17 need to.

18 Schools are also spending
19 \$175.7 million in extra school operational
20 costs. I know there's some debate on that, but
21 when we know that school calendars don't impact
22 academic achievement and they are impacting the
23 bottom line, I think we owe it to at least give
24 it a little bit of thought and research.

25 The economic impact alone is

1 staggering, but you also have the impact to our
2 families, our teachers and our students. First
3 of all, student employment is not just a way
4 for students to earn money. The Employment
5 Policy Institute has found that students who
6 work during high school are more likely to
7 obtain higher paying jobs upon graduation.

8 Teachers also report to me all the
9 time that they can tell you who worked a full
10 summer, because those high school kids come
11 back with a new appreciation for their teachers
12 and the material being taught. They have
13 learned that minimum wage isn't going to take
14 them very far, and they've been able to see the
15 value of what their teachers are teaching in
16 the real world, which is often what you hear.
17 I'm never going to use that, I'm never going to
18 use that. Well, all of a sudden they realize
19 that geometry really does have a place in the
20 world, and they may be able to relate it a
21 little better back to their instruction.

22 Teachers' continuing education. We
23 have all sorts of mandates on teachers now.
24 They have to be certified in the area in which
25 they're teaching. No Child Left Behind has an

1 entire listing of rules. So we need to make
2 sure that our teachers have the time during the
3 summer to be able to go back and get two full
4 sessions of continuing education under their
5 belt.

6 I've heard a lot of people tell me,
7 well, I have continuing ed requirements and I
8 do it during the school year. Well, that's
9 great, but you know what, as a mom of three, I
10 know that the teachers do not leave when the
11 bell rings. They don't leave when the
12 superintendents tell them they can. Most of
13 them are there very late or bringing work home
14 in order to better serve our children.

15 So, I certainly don't want my teacher
16 having to choose, is she going to leave when
17 that bell rings and dismisses her to go to a
18 college class in the evening, or is she going
19 to stay and help my child who happens to be
20 struggling and needs a little extra help, or is
21 she going to provide a different type of lesson
22 for my kid so that they can be taught in a
23 different way?

24 The requirements on our teachers are
25 endless, and I think we need to be respectful

1 of that when setting our school calendar.

2 I already mentioned child care and
3 the differences, not to mention the increased
4 cost.

5 Local autonomy. You're not asking
6 the state to create a calendar. You're simply
7 asking to make a starting point that the school
8 districts can work into.

9 We also are looking at the issue of
10 noncustodial parents. Noncustodial parents
11 normally have the chunk of time with their kids
12 during the summer months. As the school
13 calendar creeps closer and closer to the
14 beginning of August, that chunk of time is
15 often taken away. And a day here and a day
16 there isn't the same as a full week with your
17 child. Anybody who has taken a vacation with
18 their kiddo knows the amount of stress is very
19 different in a day or two vacation than when
20 you have a whole week to really relax and enjoy
21 everything your child has to offer.

22 I open up the floor for any questions
23 that you may have.

24 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Thank you very
25 much, Ms. Bruno. You were here when Doctor

1 Kelly from Bloomsburg talked about taking the
2 week off, the fourth week of September for
3 their fair, which is apparently a huge event
4 for their area, two or three school districts.
5 And his concern -- I failed to follow up with a
6 question. But his concern was, we actually
7 start a full two weeks before Labor Day, two
8 weeks into after Labor Day so that we prepare
9 for that week off.

10 And all of the information, research,
11 data that you've collected, is there anything
12 that would indicate to you -- Using that as an
13 example, although that's -- I'm not in any way
14 trying to impugn what Doctor Kelly had to say.

15 But using that as an example, is
16 there any reason to believe that that
17 disruption for, instead of having a full three
18 weeks, it's only two weeks before the full week
19 off for the fair would have some academic
20 detriment to the students or to the program?

21 MS. BRUNO: I have not seen any
22 research that addressed that situation, to be
23 honest with you. But, I do believe that the
24 bill does also provide a waiver provision for
25 school districts if that is something that

1 happens in their district because, there again,
2 reinforcing the value of education outside the
3 walls of the classroom. And I think the bill
4 had a provision that would allow them to
5 continue doing what they needed to do.

6 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: So from your
7 perspective then, the aspect of having that
8 kind of need in the time frame that Doctor
9 Kelly feels is important for the instructional
10 purposes prior to the week off is as important
11 as the week off.

12 MS. BRUNO: I haven't seen any
13 research that would you say that there's a
14 specific number of days needed. You can look
15 at some alternative calendars that have been
16 tried over periods of time such as year-round
17 school calendars where they are in school for
18 nine weeks, off for three.

19 You read superintendents' accounts
20 all the time in the papers that they didn't see
21 a difference in the academic achievement. So I
22 would say that since the bill does allow an
23 exemption for him, that that would certainly be
24 something that would be worth talking with him
25 to make sure they're doing the best for their

1 students.

2 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Thank you.

3 Other members? Representative Samuelson.

4 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: Two
5 questions on child care and energy use. If the
6 discussion is about having a week of
7 instruction at the end of August versus a week
8 of instruction at the beginning of June, trying
9 to figure out what the impact on child care
10 costs would be if the length of the summer
11 would be the same.

12 Also, same question on energy use.
13 If keeping schools open at the end of August
14 versus an extra week in early June.

15 MS. BRUNO: Let me address --

16 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: What's the
17 impact on energy costs?

18 MS. BRUNO: Well, energy costs, first
19 of all, August has the highest number of higher
20 cooling degree days; meaning, it takes more
21 electricity to keep a building at a set
22 temperature than June does. So it would be
23 more expensive to run the schools in August
24 than it would be to have them going into June.

25 As for child care, if you're simply

1 swapping days, then you're not looking at a
2 difference. But if you are looking at what we
3 call a bloated calendar where you have so many
4 nonholidays that are just actually sanctioned
5 holidays, like Christmas and Easter, Martin
6 Luther King Day, those type of things, in the
7 calendar and you simply have days off, then
8 what you're looking at is having higher costs.
9 What you can actually do is have a more compact
10 calendar where you actually do realize a longer
11 summer vacation.

12 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: But some
13 of those days in the middle of the year are
14 teacher in-service days.

15 MS. BRUNO: Some are.

16 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: Are you
17 speaking about others like, you know, Easter
18 vacation being six days or Thanksgiving being
19 six days?

20 MS. BRUNO: Right.

21 REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELSON: You'd
22 advocate shortening up some of those?

23 MS. BRUNO: Yes. We support and what
24 we've found is that polls across the United
25 States seem to always mimic the same thing, is

1 that parents support fewer number of holidays
2 between the first and last day of school than
3 they currently have right now, because they do
4 create a burden for parents. And I'm not
5 advocating that our schools need to be day care
6 centers.

7 But I think it's important that we
8 understand that our schools also cannot provide
9 the entire education our children need. And
10 so, being able to augment opportunities during
11 the summer months when they're readily
12 available is something that we do need to be
13 looking at as well.

14 It's very difficult for communities
15 to set up when you have Monday through Friday
16 off for Thanksgiving. How many parents have
17 that? If you happen to have three weeks off or
18 two weeks off at Christmas, it can be become
19 very difficult. And we, quite honestly, use
20 high school and college-age students to staff a
21 lot of the summer programs for kids. So again,
22 when that labor is not available, the costs are
23 certainly driven up.

24 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Representative
25 Pallone.

1 REPRESENTATIVE PALLONE: Thank you,
2 Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Miss Bruno.

3 I agree what you say about you learn
4 a lot as you work and how education is a
5 practical application. But I'm still trying to
6 figure out where Pythagorean's theorem and the
7 square root of pie have any impact on my wife.
8 I had to learn all of that.

9 That being said, though -- And I'm
10 going to maybe open a can of worms that I
11 shouldn't. But one of the things I didn't
12 learn was, what my grandmother tried to teach
13 is, we have two ears and one mouth and we
14 should hear twice as much we say.

15 So that being said, I know that in
16 some areas and some states they provide for
17 kind of an unusual calendar. And I think the
18 experience I've had in the San Berardino Valley
19 in California, where the students go, I think
20 it's from
21 K through 8 or 9 they go on a 12-month
22 calendar. And then when they reach what would
23 be a traditional high school, 10 through 12, go
24 into the traditional September to June-type
25 calendar.

1 In your research of calendar reviews,
2 have you looked at anything like that? And is
3 there a benefit or a lack of a benefit for
4 doing that?

5 MS. BRUNO: What I've seen, the
6 research that supports the year-round school
7 calendars has been paid for by the National
8 Association For Year-Round Education. My
9 association, we do not pay for any research
10 because I don't feel that it really has any
11 validity when I pay for it myself.

12 But the problem I have with their
13 research is it's not peer reviewed. And when I
14 go to superintendents who have tried both
15 programs, consistently I'm told it costs more
16 money and I did not see any academic
17 achievement differences. And so, that's what
18 we base our ideas on.

19 I think it's also important in
20 California to note that a lot --

21 REPRESENTATIVE PALLONE: Not that we
22 want to do anything like California.

23 MS. BRUNO: A lot of the models from
24 California that have trickled their way across
25 had a lot to do with overcrowding and not being

1 able to afford to build schools, which they
2 again found, you know, 10 years down the road
3 to build that school, it's a little more
4 expensive than it was when they truly needed
5 it.

6 But it's also the easiest way for
7 school districts to pass bond proposals, in
8 many parts of the country is to threaten that
9 they'll go to a year-round school system, a
10 multi-track system if they don't get the money
11 to build new schools. It's amazing how quickly
12 those bonds gets passed, which I think shows
13 you what the public truly believes.

14 It's also important to note that L.A.
15 Unified School--they had the largest multitrack
16 year-round system--was taken to court, and the
17 state actually looked into it and found that
18 they were not serving their children the way
19 they needed to with that system because there
20 was so much trekking kids from one section of
21 the school to the next every time that the new
22 school year began and the new terms began, and
23 the kids were not always on the same page with
24 their families and what vacations were. It was
25 just an enormous mess.

1 We've actually seen the number
2 decrease over the years, and it's very
3 interesting to see schools try the program and
4 drop it like a hot potato a few years down the
5 road. If it was truly a magic bullet, I think
6 you would see a lot more schools sticking to it
7 for a longer period of time.

8 REPRESENTATIVE PALLONE: A simple yes
9 or no then would be that probably the September
10 to June traditional school year is preferred --

11 MS. BRUNO: Yes.

12 REPRESENTATIVE PALLONE: -- over the
13 blended or mixed annual --

14 MS. BRUNO: Most definitely.

15 REPRESENTATIVE PALLONE: Thank you.
16 Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

17 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Representative
18 Gabig.

19 REPRESENTATIVE GABIG: Thank you, Mr.
20 Chairman.

21 To follow up on the Chairman's
22 question, and your response to it actually,
23 that Bloomsburg's case which does sort of argue
24 for local control because of their unique
25 situation there, you said under 258 -- H.B. 258

1 that they could request a waiver. Is that what
2 you said?

3 MS. BRUNO: It's my understanding
4 that if there's a specific -- a specific
5 instance that would precipitate their needing
6 to take time off during what is looked at as
7 the traditional school year, that they would be
8 allowed to petition the board of education and
9 make their case directly to them so that they
10 could begin earlier.

11 REPRESENTATIVE GABIG: Okay. The
12 Chairman actually showed me some of the
13 language. I didn't have it in front of me. I
14 think Representative Payne had brought that up
15 to the previous panel if there's something we
16 could do with the language that's in this bill
17 to accommodate those kind of situations. His
18 response, of course, was, he likes the current
19 law without this. But maybe we could take a
20 look at trying to accommodate something like
21 that with this language.

22 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: There was
23 discussion with teacher strikes too.

24 REPRESENTATIVE GABIG: Well, anyway,
25 I found that interesting. Thank you for your

1 response. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 MS. BRUNO: Sure.

3 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Thank you,
4 Representative Gabig. Anybody else have any
5 questions for Ms. Bruno?

6 (No response.)

7 CHAIRMAN TANGRETTI: Well, thank you
8 for coming all this way in your pampered state.
9 We really appreciate your expert testimony.

10 MS. BRUNO: Thank you.

11 Having said good-bye to our last
12 witness, this committee stands adjourned.

13 (At or about 12:30 p.m., the hearing
14 concluded.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Karen J. Meister, Reporter, Notary Public, duly commissioned and qualified in and for the County of York, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of my stenotype notes taken by me and subsequently reduced to computer printout under my supervision, and that this copy is a correct record of the same.

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Karen J. Meister - Reporter
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