

Senate Education Committee

Trevor Currier 271-4151

SB 403, requiring all schools to start the school year after Labor Day.

Hearing Date: February 17, 2026

Time Opened: 9:16 a.m.

Time Closed: 9:57 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Ward, Sullivan, Abbas, Prentiss and Altschiller

Members of the Committee Absent : None

Bill Analysis: This bill requires that all schools in New Hampshire begin the school year no earlier than the day after Labor Day.

Sponsors:

Sen. Gannon

Sen. McGough

Sen. Lang

Sen. Murphy

Sen. Pearl

Rep. Litchfield

Rep. L. Walsh

Rep. Mandelbaum

Rep. Bridle

Who supports the bill:14 People signed in support of SB 403. To see the full list of sign-ins, please email the committee aide (trevor.currier@gc.nh.gov).

Who opposes the bill:208 People signed in opposition to SB 403. To see the full list of sign-ins, please email the committee aide (trevor.currier@gc.nh.gov).

Who is neutral on the bill: No one.

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Senator Bill Gannon, *Senate District 23*

- Senator Gannon introduced and testified in support of Senate Bill 403.
- Sen. Gannon confirmed that the bill requires all schools to start after Labor Day.
- He stated that Governor Sununu conducted a comprehensive study commission.
- He said there are economic benefits tied to the bill, and the study commission found that it could bring in between twenty-four and forty million dollars in extra revenue for New Hampshire businesses. He also mentioned that a similar

bill in Pennsylvania was expected to generate 400 million dollars in additional revenue.

- He determined that the main goal of the bill is to boost family time.
- He mentioned that he's heard from hundreds of fourth graders who support starting school after Labor Day.
- He stated that he doesn't believe an extra day or two of summer would affect students' AP Exam scores.
- He shared that the Governor expressed her support for the bill.
- Senator Sullivan asked how local districts plan to address the implications this legislation might have on their contracts. Senator Gannon stated that his local school districts are willing to work towards resolving the contractual challenges.
- Senator Abbas expressed concern about younger students' ability to transition back to school and noted that starting before Labor Day provides a helpful adjustment period. Senator Gannon remarked that his children are ready to learn on the first day and that this approach would create one shorter transition week for students instead of two.
- Senator Abbas asked when the surrounding states start school. Senator Gannon stated that families from neighboring states are more likely to come to New Hampshire for Labor Weekend because we would have the workforce available to keep businesses open.
- Senator Altschiller inquired about how his school district plans to handle the end of the school year if snow days occur during winter. He also expressed concern that schools without air conditioning could negatively impact students' ability to learn if school extends into late June. Senator Gannon responded that schools are more likely to face high temperatures in late August than in mid to late June.
- Senator Abbas stated that any school could do this currently. Senator Gannon replied that there needs to be a uniform approach to address workforce issues and all families should have that weekend.
- Senator Sullivan said that Manchester begins school after Labor Day and that her kids had no trouble adjusting. She mentioned that individual schools can help students ease back into the routine by strategically planning the first few days and by having a shortened week from Tuesday to Friday after the holiday.
- Senator Altschiller asked whether the success of this policy depends on the tourism industry and the ability to retain students in the workforce. Senator Gannon clarified that no, the economic effects would be a secondary benefit.
- Senator Ward asked how it would work if schools had to eliminate February or April vacation because of the policy change and unavoidable snow days. Senator Gannon stated that the policy change would not significantly affect the last day of school.

- Senator Prentiss asked Senator Gannon if he had an inventory of when schools are currently opening in New Hampshire. Senator Gannon replied that he did not, but he is working to compile a list for the Committee.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition:

Barrett Christina, *New Hampshire School Board Association*

- Mr. Christina testified in opposition to Senate Bill 403.
- He stated that the New Hampshire School Board Association (NHSBA) adopted a rule requiring NHSBA to advocate for districts to maintain control over their calendars.
- He expressed concern with the implications the bill may have on statewide testing, AP Exams, collective bargaining provisions, CTE Calendars, interstate schools, professional development, and sports calendars.
- He stated that CTE Centers and local school districts have been attempting to align their schedules for many years.
- He stated that the implications of the inter-state compacts could be severe, potentially causing New Hampshire students to start a week later than out-of-state students.
- Senator Sullivan stated that schools either adopt a 180-day calendar or an hourly calendar. She asked whether having the same start date could help ease concerns about testing schedules. He stated that could be the case.

Megan Tuttle, *NEA-NH*

- Ms. Tuttle testified in opposition to Senate Bill 403.
- Ms. Tuttle expressed that her organization has not been contacted regarding the bill.
- She asked if the bill only applies to students and whether educators can use their four professional development days before Labor Day.
- She stated that the temperature in the classrooms has gotten worse over time and is concerned that the issue would be exacerbated by extending the school year further into June.
- She inquired whether the bill also covers charter schools.
- She said that many camps finish before Labor Day, which could create childcare challenges for families.
- She stated that public school calendars should not be dictated by the demands of private businesses and should instead be focused on what is best for the education of the students.

Patrick O'Mara, *New Hampshire Career Academy*

- Mr. O'Mara testified in opposition to Senate Bill 403.
- Mr. O'Mara expressed concern with the broad language of the bill.
- He said this policy change would put his students at a disadvantage because the college courses his students are enrolled in begin in August. He stated that students would either have to miss the opening weeks of the college courses or only participate in the spring semester.
- He stated that this will negatively impact New Hampshire dual enrollment students.
- He expressed the importance of flexibility for early college models or dual enrollment programs.
- Senator Altschiller asked how he anticipates this policy would affect his school. He explained that it is a public charter high school embedded on college campuses across the state, where students take college courses and attend all of their classes on campus. He noted that the proposed change would create a scheduling misalignment.

Kevin Fleming

- Mr. Fleming testified in opposition to SB 403.
- He stated that in Hampton, the school added school days to the school year and acknowledged that students may have an employment obligation that may have to take precedence.
- He noted that his district would go to school on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday and have a four-day Labor Day weekend.
- He stated that the school days were more useful and productive in August than they were in June.
- Senator Altschiller asked about the differences in classroom experiences from the beginning to the end of the school year. He said it worked well for Hampton and mentioned that even a small part of the school day during the year was more helpful than a full day of school in June.
- Senator Sullivan asked if students with jobs were allowed to leave school early. He replied that yes, students would come to school around their work schedule.

Jerry Frew, *New Hampshire School Administrators Association*

- Mr. Frew stated he is concerned about the impact on local control.
- He also expressed concern about how this impacts student learning, noting that AP students are already two to three weeks behind students in southern states that start earlier, even though all students take the AP exams at the same time.
- He stated that students are more prepared to learn in August than in June.
- Senator Sullivan asked whether students who start after Labor Day perform worse on their AP Exams. He couldn't confirm that.

- Senator Sullivan asked whether students check out at the end of school regardless of when that occurs. He agreed with Senator Sullivan.

Neutral Information Presented: None.

T.C.

Date Hearing Report completed: February 17, 2026