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IN SUPPORT of HB 549
Before the House Education and Career Readiness Committee
May 22, 2018

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chairman Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the House Education and Career Readiness Committee, thank you for this opportunity to share some intriguing research on how Ohio voters feel about school start dates in Ohio.

Last week, I had the opportunity to work with the Ohio Department of Education and others to discuss opportunities for students interested in business careers. Often overlooked by tech jobs, careers in marketing, sales, human resources, management and finance are an integral part of our economy. Summer work experience has been proven crucial for long-term career success in these jobs.

At the same time, finding adequate employees is the number one concern of most of the businesses in the travel economy. Many Ohio farms, hotels, restaurants, attractions, shops, museums and transportation services depend on having enough workers. With workers returning to school earlier and earlier, businesses are cutting hours and shortening operating seasons due to lack of employees.

Summer jobs make Ohioans more employable. The economic ramifications when businesses cut hours and dates of operation due to lack of employees is harmful to business owners, other workers who are caught in the snare of reduced hours and communities who depend on tax revenue. But when do Ohioans want school to start and why?

The Ohio Travel Association worked with Public Opinion Strategies, led by Neil Newhouse, on a statewide survey of 800 registered Ohio voters in September. Before you is a summary of the key findings and methodology.

Ohio voters want a longer summer break instead of a broken up school year. What was most remarkable about this survey is that this support cuts across partisan, geographic and demographic lines. Researchers told us it's rare to have an issue with such overwhelming and broad support. Fifty-nine percent of Ohio voters prefer a school start date after Labor Day and 12% prefer school starting the

fourth week of August. That's 71% of voters who are saying school shouldn't start before the end of August.

When asked specifically about their support of a bill making post Labor Day the default, 66% of Ohioans were in favor. Teachers and parents agreed, with 65% of teachers supporting the bill and 61% of parents.

We also gave Ohioans an opportunity to tell us why they felt strongly about this issue, and the transcribed comments filled nearly 100 pages.

Voters explained their support for the proposal quite passionately. I'll share some of the top findings now:

- One of the most important reasons why Ohioans prefer a later start date is that August heat makes it difficult for kids to learn. We heard this repeatedly. In fact 71% of voters agreed that forcing students to learn when temperatures are in the '90s is an impediment to learning.
- Ohioans want greater uniformity in school start dates across the state. We heard statements of how when one school starts in early August and another in September it creates hardships for extended and divided families to plan time together, and that it's also confusing for both drivers and truancy officers.
- Ohioans told us that when their students start school early, many aren't able to secure the best summer jobs and internships over the summer, or they have to quit their jobs early. Either way they aren't able to make as much money to pay for education or to help with family expenses
- Voters also told us that a later and more unified start date would make it easier for families to spend more time together. Not every voter has the luxury of scheduling their vacation time early in the summer and family commitments keep folks busy in June and into July. They told us that by the time they can take time off to spend time with their children or grandchildren, the kids are headed back to school.
- Another strong message we heard is that a later start will save schools utility costs. This made sense, as 32% of voters identified insufficient school funding as the most important problem facing K-12 public schools over quality of education, curriculum, testing and accountability. Voters are concerned about making sure our schools are funded properly and are using their resources wisely.

- And although there are more reasons why Ohio voters think this is a good idea, another which rose to the top was the opportunity for teachers to pursue advanced degrees and additional training in the summer.

Opponents argue that this is an issue that should be decided at the local level; however, 93% of Ohio voters say they've never been asked their opinion on when the school year should begin, indicating this is less of a local control issue and more of a school board control issue. In fact, 71% of teachers also said they'd never been asked their preference for a start date.

Ohio voters, including teachers and parents, want a school start date after Labor Day. They say it's good for their students, their families and for Ohio.

Thank you for your time, attention and consideration. I'm happy to respond to any questions.

School Starts in Ohio

Key Findings from Statewide Survey of Ohio Registered Voters

*Survey Summary of 800 Ohio Registered Voters
Conducted Sept. 9-12, 2017 by Neil Newhouse and Public Opinion Strategies
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VOTERS HAVEN'T BEEN ASKED ABOUT SCHOOL START PREFERENCES

- 93% say they've never been asked their opinion regarding when the school year should begin, indicating this is less of a local control issue and more of a school board control issue.
- 71% of teachers haven't been asked either.

OHIO VOTERS WANT A POST-LABOR DAY START AND CONSISTENCY OF SCHOOL START DATES.

- Voters prefer a school start date after Labor Day (59%) over the fourth week of August (12%), the third week of August (15%) or the first two weeks of August (12%).
- By nearly 2:1, Ohio voters believe all K-12 public schools should start on the same date.

VOTERS SUPPORT LEGISLATION REQUIRING OHIO SCHOOLS TO START AFTER LABOR DAY

- 66% support the legislation.
- 65% of teachers support the legislation, while 61% of parents are in support.
- Support cuts across gender, age, partisanship, media markets, income, education and ethnicity.

THEY'LL VOTE FOR CANDIDATES WHO SUPPORT POST LABOR DAY SCHOOL START LEGISLATION

- Supporting this legislation is supporting the wishes of constituents, as 52% say they would vote for a candidate who supported this proposal. Only 25% said they'd vote for a candidate opposing the issue, and 17% said it won't make any difference.

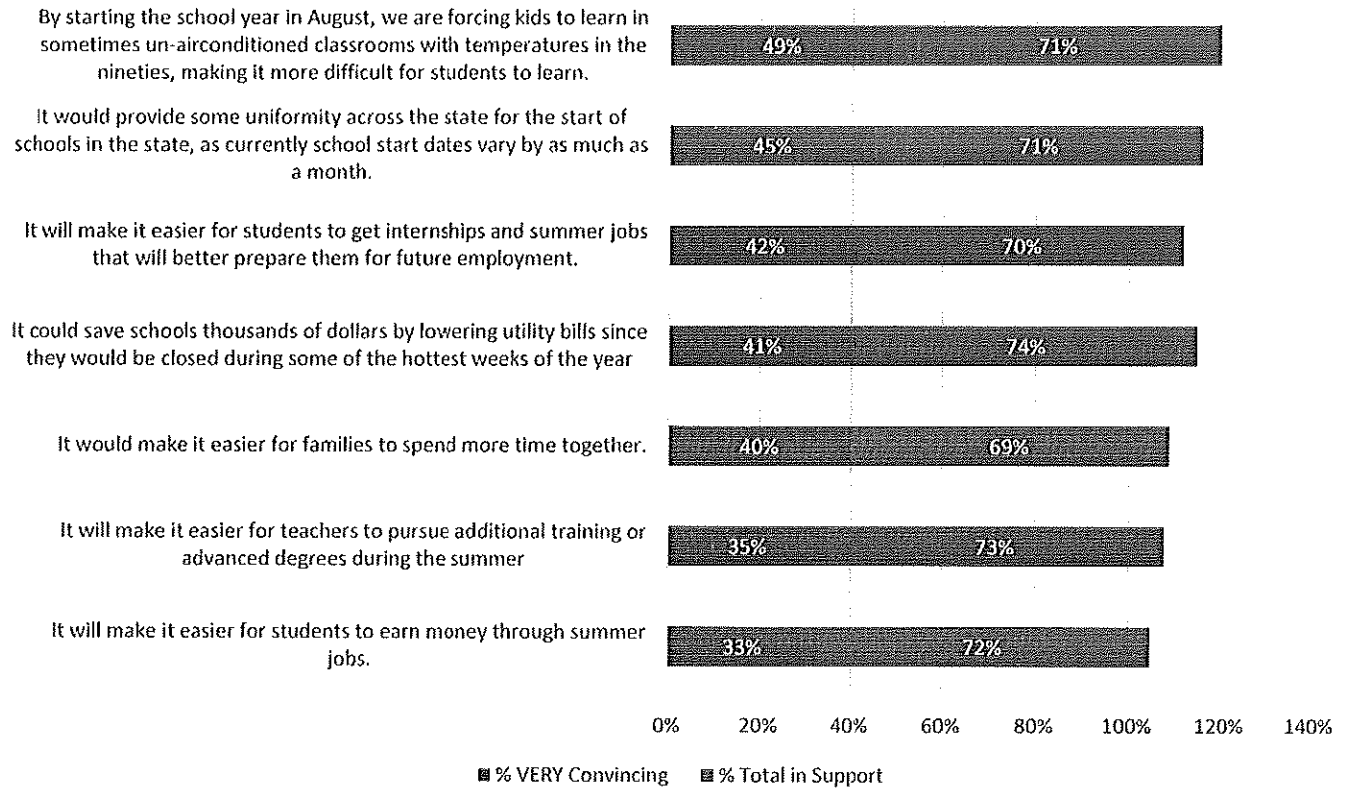
TO MAKE THIS WORK, WIDE MAJORITIES SUPPORT EXTENDING THE SCHOOL DAY

- 75% are in favor of lengthening the school day by 15 minutes.
- 69% are in favor of lengthening the school day by 30 minutes.

VOTERS SAY INSUFFICIENT FUNDING IS THE MOST RECOGNIZED PROBLEM FACING SCHOOLS

- Voters identified insufficient funding (32%) as the most important problem facing K-12 public schools in the state over quality of education, curriculum, testing, accountability, etc.

TOP REASONS OHIOANS SUPPORT A LATER SCHOOL START



SURVEY FIELD DATES: September 9-11, 2017

SAMPLE: N= 800 Registered Voters Statewide

SAMPLE TYPE: N=480 Landline/N=320 Cell-Phone

MARGIN OF ERROR: ±3.46% at a 95% confidence level

ABOUT PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

Public Opinion Strategies is a leading survey research company specializing in political, public affairs, and corporate positioning research. Their research is well respected, which is why prestigious media outlets such as NBC News, The Wall Street Journal, and National Public Radio rely on the firm to conduct their polling. Founded in 1991, Public Opinion Strategies have conducted more than 20,000 research projects, interviewed more than eight million Americans across the country, and conducted more than 5,000 focus groups.