



Thomas P. Koch
Mayor

City Hall
Office of the Mayor
Quincy, Massachusetts

February 24, 2015

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D
Commissioner
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
75 Pleasant Street
Malden, Massachusetts 02148-4906

Re: Request for Waiver Pursuant to 603 CMR 27.00 (2)

Dear Dr. Chester:

I am writing to you as Chairman of the Quincy School Committee (hereinafter "School Committee") to inform you that on Monday, February 23, 2015, the School Committee voted unanimously to submit a written application pursuant to 603 CMR 27.00 (2) for the purpose of seeking a waiver, from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (hereinafter "DESE"), of the minimum school year requirement set forth in 603 CMR 27.03(3). Based on the unprecedented number of weather related cancellation days this school year, including three (3) State of Emergency Days, the School Committee is requesting that DESE grant a waiver for any and all schools days that would be required after June 25, 2015. Based on Quincy's current eleven (11) school cancellation days, the 2014-2015 school year would total 177 school days if the last day of school was approved for June 25, 2015.

The School Committee is submitting this waiver application based on several factors, which include, but are not limited to: the significant, unbudgeted, financial cost to the school department; the significant hardship on parents, students and staff in regard to the scheduling of schools days on previously scheduled vacation weeks, weekends and holidays; the scheduling of the school year late into June which historically has resulted in students and staff working in excessively hot working conditions, not conducive to learning and last, but not least, the scheduling of school days on vacation weeks, weekends and holidays will require time-consuming impact bargaining with unions who may or may not agree to the proposed school day modifications.

The significant, unbudgeted, financial cost to the School Committee for opening schools on unscheduled school days includes salary expenses for employees that could meet or exceed a daily rate of approximately \$75,000. This does not take into account increased utility and other incidental costs to the School Committee for opening school buildings on previously scheduled days off.

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As stated previously, the School Committee does not have the funding to pay for this additional expense and the City of Quincy, as with most cities and towns affected by the unprecedented weather conditions, is millions of dollars in deficit due to snow removal efforts and is not in a position to take on this additional expense.

The significant hardship on parents, students and staff in regard to the scheduling of schools days on previously scheduled vacation weeks, weekends and holidays is also not insignificant. Each year in January the School Committee establishes a school calendar for the following school year. This calendar gives notice to parents, students and staff of the 185 days that school attendance is or may be required and establishes a covenant between these three parties and the School Committee. The School Committee, with the publication of this calendar, requires parents, students and staff to make a commitment to the scheduled school year and in exchange, the School Committee has historically respected the reliance that parents, students and staff have put on this calendar. The School Committee has respected this reliance by not interfering with plans that have been previously made for scheduled vacation weeks, weekends and holidays. To now renege on this covenant, established over a year ago, amounts to an unfair process that forces parents, students and staff to change their plans (which for many involve significant financial and personal sacrifice) or be in violation of school regulations by not attending school. This, therefore, is not an acceptable alternative.

The scheduling of school late into the month of June is also a concern for the School Committee. Historically, late June school days occur on excessively hot days. This results in excessively hot working conditions that are not conducive to effective instruction or learning. Unfortunately, only two (2) of our eighteen (18) school buildings in Quincy are equipped with Air Conditioning. Therefore, for the majority of our school buildings, there are no means to effectively cool the working and learning environment.

Lastly, the School Committee is also concerned that the scheduling of school days on vacation weeks, weekends and holidays will require time-consuming impact bargaining with unions who may or may not agree to the proposed school day modifications. Also, if the unions do agree to the proposed school day modifications, they may only do so at additional financial compensation beyond what has already been described above. Again, unbudgeted, financial costs to the School Committee for opening schools on unscheduled school days is already cost prohibitive. The additional costs associated with and resulting from impact bargaining may only make the already untenable financial situation worse.

The School Committee firmly believes that ending the school year on June 25, 2015, would be in the best interest of our students and our learning community.

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Therefore, for all of the above reasons, the School Committee is submitting this written waiver request and asking DESE to waive the minimum school year requirement set forth in 603 CMR 27.03(3) and to allow the Quincy Public Schools to end the school year on June 25, 2015.

I and the School Committee thank you in advance for considering this application and request that you respond as soon as possible to this application so that the School Committee can plan appropriately for the remainder of the school year.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas P. Koch", written in a cursive style.

Thomas P. Koch
Mayor
Chairman of the School Committee
City of Quincy

xc: Dr. Richard DeCristofaro
Quincy School Committee