



March 17, 2025

Representative Bennett, Chair
Education Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: Opposition to House File 1124 - School Start Date for the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 School Years

Dear Chair Bennett and Members of the Education Policy Committee:

As CFO of Canterbury Park in Shakopee, I am writing to express our opposition to House File 1124, which would allow school districts to begin the school year before Labor Day for the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 school years.

Canterbury Park relies heavily on student employees for our seasonal operations. These students make up a significant portion of our workforce during our busy summer season, filling essential roles throughout our facility. Having schools start before Labor Day would create substantial staffing challenges for our operation at a critical time.

The post-Labor Day school start has worked well for Minnesota's tourism and entertainment businesses for many years, creating a balance that supports both education and seasonal industries like ours. While we understand the desire for flexibility in school scheduling, we believe the current arrangement benefits both businesses and the many students who gain valuable work experience and income through summer employment.

We respectfully urge the committee to reject House File 1124 and maintain the current school start date requirement.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Randy Dehmer
CFO
Canterbury Park



March 17, 2025

Representative Bennett, Chair
House Education Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: Opposition to House File 1124 - School Start Date for the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 School Years

Dear Chair Bennett and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Shakopee Chamber & Visitors Bureau, I am writing to express our opposition to House File 1124, which would allow school districts to begin the school year before Labor Day for the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 school years.

As the only Destination Marketing Organization in Scott County, the Shakopee Chamber & Visitors Bureau represents and promotes not only Shakopee's hospitality businesses but also those throughout the surrounding region. Our mission is to drive economic growth through tourism, which has proven to be a significant economic engine for our community.

Our data demonstrates that tourism is vital to Shakopee's economy. According to our 2024 Visitor Profile, Shakopee alone accounts for 52.3% of visitor spending in Scott County, with neighboring communities like Prior Lake (18.8%) and Savage (11.5%) also benefiting significantly. Our region's largest attractions—Valleyfair, Canterbury Park, Minnesota Renaissance Festival, and nearby Mystic Lake Casino Hotel—draw visitors from across the Midwest, with the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, Rochester-Mason City-Austin, and Fargo-Valley City being our top three origin markets.

The timing of the school year directly impacts our tourism season. The critical Labor Day weekend represents one of the final opportunities for family travel before the school year begins. Our small businesses—restaurants, retail shops, accommodations, and service providers—rely heavily on this extended summer season. Food and dining account for 37.1% of visitor spending, followed by accommodations (16%) and retail (15.1%). Should the school year begin before Labor Day, we anticipate a significant negative impact on these businesses during what should be their most profitable time of year.

Furthermore, visitor spending data shows that tourism in our region attracts higher-income households, with 43% of spending coming from households earning over \$100,000 annually. These visitors spend an average of \$222 on accommodations, \$193 on retail, \$150 on outdoor

recreation, \$85 on food, and \$97 on attractions per cardholder. These dollars support local jobs, generate tax revenue, and contribute to the quality of life for all residents of Scott County.

Furthermore, visitor spending data shows that tourism in our region attracts higher-income households, with 43% of spending coming from households earning over \$100,000 annually. These visitors spend an average of \$222 on accommodations, \$193 on retail, \$150 on outdoor recreation, \$85 on food, and \$97 on attractions per cardholder. These dollars support local jobs, generate tax revenue, and contribute to the quality of life for all residents of Scott County.

Allowing schools to start before Labor Day would significantly shorten the tourism season, leading to decreased revenue for businesses, fewer employment opportunities for students and seasonal workers, and reduced tax revenue for our communities. Many of our seasonal businesses depend on this critical end-of-summer period to remain viable throughout the year.

We respectfully urge you to oppose House File 1124 and maintain the post-Labor Day school start. This policy has served Minnesota's tourism industry well for decades and continues to be vital for the economic health of communities like Shakopee.

Thank you for your consideration of our position on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Tim Zunker
President
Shakopee Chamber & Visitors Bureau

March 14, 2025

Representative Bennett, Chair
Education Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: Opposition to House File 1124 - School Start Date for the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 School Years

Dear Chair Bennett and Members of the Education Policy Committee:

As General Manager of Valleyfair Amusement Park in Shakopee, I am writing to express our opposition to House File 1124, which would allow school districts to begin the school year before Labor Day for the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 school years.

Valleyfair is a premier tourism destination for Minnesota, attracting visitors from across the state and neighboring regions. The period between mid-August and Labor Day represents one of our most significant attendance periods of the season. Families traditionally use these final weeks of summer to visit attractions like ours before returning to school routines. An earlier school start would substantially reduce this important travel period for Minnesota families.

Additionally, Valleyfair relies heavily on student employees for our seasonal operations. These students make up a large portion of our workforce during our summer season. Having schools start before Labor Day would create significant staffing challenges at a time when we experience high visitor attendance.

The post-Labor Day school start has long supported Minnesota's tourism industry while providing valuable employment opportunities for students. We believe this balanced approach serves both educational and economic interests in our state.

We respectfully urge the committee to reject House File 1124 and maintain the current school start date requirement.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Raul Rehnborg
General Manager
Valleyfair Amusement Park