



Testimony in Opposition to SB 517/HB 1610 - General Provisions - Standard Time - Year-Round Daylight Saving Time

March 5, 2020

Good Afternoon Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to SB 517/HB 1610.

I am Lisa VanBuskirk, the leader of Start School Later's Maryland and Anne Arundel County chapters. The goal of my all-volunteer organization is to educate communities and policy makers about the physical and mental health, safety, and academic benefits of age-appropriate school hours. In 2014, Maryland was the first state in the nation to pass legislation related to school start times, with a joint study by the Maryland State Department of Education and Maryland Department of Health. In 2016, the General Assembly followed with the Orange Ribbon for Healthy School Hours, which recognizes school systems with no elementary before 8 a.m. and no middle or high school before 8:30 a.m. The average middle school start time is 8:11 and the average high school start time is 7:54 a.m. Both levels have schools that start between 7:00 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. Most elementary schools start later in the morning, but there are elementary schools that start as early as 7:30 a.m. and as late as 9:45 a.m.¹

I acknowledge the negative health and social impacts society bears when we switch from Standard Time (ST) to Daylight Savings Time (DST) and back again. Just today, the Wall Street Journal published a story about the negative effects of switching back and forth and the call by circadian scientists to move to permanent Standard Time and do away with Daylight Savings Time, the complete opposite of this proposed legislation.²

Permanent Daylight Savings Time, combined with the current too-early school start times, would have an even greater negative impact on adolescent circadian rhythm, safety, health, and academics, than the status quo and is contrary to the intent of previous state legislation.

¹ <https://www.startschoollater.net/md---statewide.html> see multiple graphics with list of all middle and high school start times and bell times relative to Orange Ribbon criteria.

² https://www.wsj.com/articles/heres-why-health-experts-want-to-stop-daylight-saving-time-11583340645?fbclid=IwAR0YLjCfiS_D7RMQi55jqaXYUuKUORnk-o5GmmiQCgdOKbzAkLJyijB1Wmc

When Massachusetts studied the issue in 2017, their report made two caveats to the implementation of permanent DST, what they called Atlantic Time; community education and later school start times.³

The latest sunrises of the year occur late December through mid-January, which would be at about 8:25-8:35 a.m. depending on where you are in the state, under permanent DST. Civil dawn, the 30 minutes or so before sunrise, when it is light enough to see without artificial illumination, would begin at about 8 a.m. I lived in the Netherlands for four years, where sunrise is as late as 8:50 a.m. (standard time); it was brutal.

The “Save Standard Time” organization has an interactive website where you can put in your location, what time you wake up, and what time you have to be at work or school. It compares the number of days you would wake or be at work/school before sunrise for permanent Standard Time, permanent Daylight Savings Time, and our current practice of shifting clocks.⁴ (See also Page 3 for two examples). For example the school that currently starts at 7 a.m. would for the six months from the end of September to the end of March, start before sunrise. They would even start before civil dawn from late October to early March. In comparison, starting school at 9:00 under permanent DST, would always be after sunrise.

It is not just the school bell time we ought to consider, but the fact that so many more Maryland students will be picked up by a bus or walk to school in the dark during the winter, relative to the Standard Time. This is a safety issue. As the Massachusetts report acknowledges “One way to avoid the downsides of year-round DST for school-aged children would be to delay school start-times until after there is sufficient daylight for safe travel.” Many Maryland students ride buses for an hour, coupled with having to be at the bus stop 10 minutes early and arriving 15-30 minutes before the bell. We must take into account the impact of permanent DST on the darkness of their commute plus school start time.

Please vote in opposition to SB 517/HB 1610 or amend the bill to include a mandate for a minimum safe, healthy, and age-appropriate start time for all schools.

Thank you,



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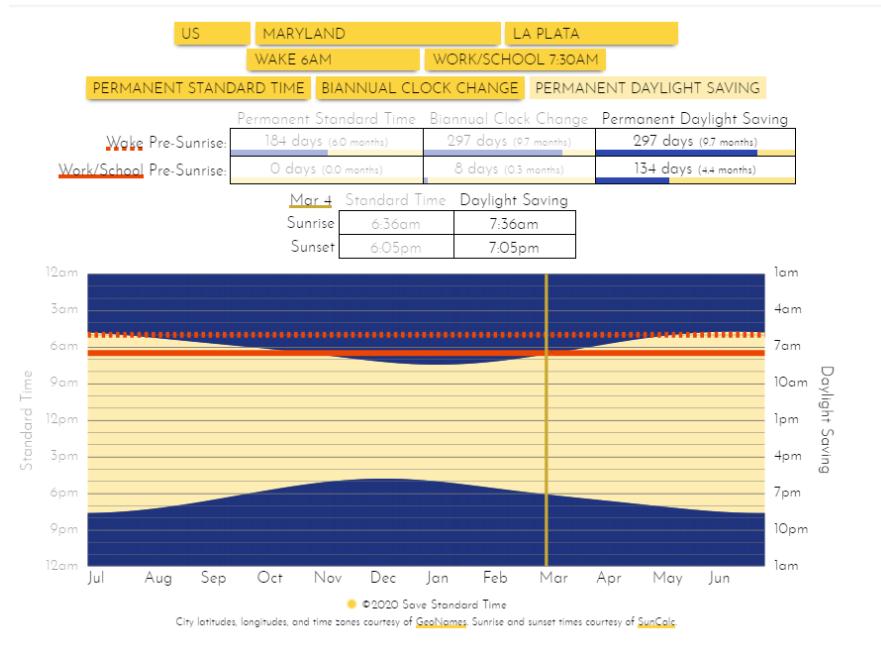
³ https://www.ctnewsjunkie.com/upload/2017/11/Special_Commission_Commonwealths_Time_Zone.pdf

⁴ <http://savestandardtime.com/chart/>

Screenshots from <http://savestandardtime.com/chart/>

La Plata, wake at 6 a.m., have to be at school by 7:30 a.m.

Permanent DST- 134 days at school before sunrise.



Hagerstown. Wake at 7:30 a.m. Have to be at school at 9 a.m.

Permanent DST- 0 days at school before sunrise.

