

Merry Eisner-Heidorn
2415 Boston Street
Baltimore, MD 21224

March 4, 2024

Re: Testimony in Support of HB1418 “Public Middle and High Schools – Start Time for Instruction – Requirement”

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice-Chair Wilkins and all members of the 2024 House Ways & Means Committee;

In 2014, Maryland recognized that school start times could impact student performance and passed legislation to study the issue. That legislation was sponsored by then Delegate Aruna Miller, now our Lieutenant Governor. I had the good fortune to serve as a parent representative on the panel.

In 2016, Maryland acknowledged the impact and created the "Orange Ribbon" program to award schools who addressed the issue.

(<https://marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/09272016/TabN.pdf>).

And yet, here we are in 2024 and there aren't many orange ribbons. Perhaps it's time to INSIST that schools take sleep seriously?

The fiscal note for HB1418 suggests that healthy bell times would be a burdensome state mandate (based on statistics from 2014 and 2016.) But Anne Arundel, Howard and Montgomery counties have all found ways to better align bell times with adolescent sleep cycles without the significant cost suggested by the fiscal note. Perhaps those three counties can share what they've learned with the rest of the state?

We have come a long way in the last 10 years. Medical science is very clear that sleep is a critical factor in physical and emotional well-being. Let's do something that benefits all kids and doesn't cost much.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you vote in the affirmative on HB1418.



Merry Eisner-Heidorn