

Testimony in Support (FAV) of SB0468

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Support for Senate Bill 0468 (Public Middle and High Schools—Start Time for Instruction)

Mr. Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

I'm an attorney and a Maryland resident, and I grew up in Anne Arundel County, where I served on its school board as a full-voting student member.

I'm speaking today to make one point: setting a reasonable floor on school start times cannot wait.

I am 35 years old. When I was in high school 20 years ago, I had already spent my childhood fighting for later school start times. Back then, I was inspired by a woman who had also served on the Anne Arundel board and been fighting for later start times for decades. How many more decades do students have to wait? Every year that passes, early start times harm more students.

And I mean serious harm. I remember sitting at school board meetings, to testify on this issue, while hallucinating because I was so exhausted. I remember dreading every day of school because it was such a struggle to get there safely, and then asking a friend to kick me during class while I secretly chewed gum so I could stay awake. And I remember organizing an independent study so I could sleep in the library instead of going to class. How many times does this story need to repeat before states say this is unacceptable?

I know it would be great if local school boards fixed this on their own. But local boards can't always put kids' health and education first, so they are too slow. Serving on one myself, I saw how hard it was for local boards to make this change without statewide guardrails, even when advocates like me served on those boards. We needed legislation like this to make clear that healthy school start times are not negotiable; they are a basic health, safety, and educational necessity.

Students today have already waited way too long. So I'm asking you to support this legislation now. It's a small change you can make happen that will truly transform lives. Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,

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