



Howard County Council

Deb Jung
Councilmember

District 4

George Howard Building
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043-4392

Senate Chair Brian Feldman
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

March 5, 2025

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members:

I am testifying today in FAVOR of SB468/HB1015, School Start Time Instructions. I represent District 4 on the Howard County Council, and I appreciate that the bill sponsors are addressing this important issue. Advocating for later school start times for middle and high school students led me to seek elected office in 2018. I saw firsthand how my then teen daughter struggled to go to bed early enough to get the recommended number of hours of sleep before having to get up in time for school. These up-all-night, sleep-all-day teenagers used to be a household mystery but now we understand the biological factors that govern teenagers' sleep schedules.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that middle and high school students should start school no earlier than 8.30am to better align with their natural sleep patterns. Later start times lead to better sleep, better grades, and better mental health. Research shows that teenagers who start their school day at 9am or later do even better than their peers who start school earlier. Good, better, best: let the children rest.

If later is better than why haven't all local Boards of Education (BOE) adopted this research-based policy by now? I appreciate that SB468/HB1015 takes the pressure off of the local BOEs and makes this a statewide decision. BOEs face too much public criticism for major policy shifts and changing start times will be yet another exhausting fight against the status quo. The science is irrefutable, and this bill makes it easier to make the healthy decision for students.

In Howard County, our BOE attempted to shift start times for the 2024-2025 school year. Six middle schools now start before 8am and the remaining 14 middle schools start at 8.30am. All high schools in Howard County start at 7.50am. During the BOE's public hearing on start times, I testified that schools should start even later to better align with the sleep science, but the vote unanimously favored a more compressed timeframe. Concurrently the BOE expanded walk zones to eliminate busing costs due to other unrelated transportation decisions. The extra sleep

provided by the later times was negated by the loss of bus transportation and the extra time of walking up to two miles to high school.

I would also ask that you file a strengthening amendment to SB468 so that the benefits of later start times are not undermined by expanded walk zones or bus service reductions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Deb Jung". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Deb" and the last name "Jung" clearly visible.

Deb Jung

Howard County Council, District 4