

TO: Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment

BILL: Senate Bill (SB) 0468 – Public Middle, High, and Charter Schools – Start Time for Instruction

DATE: March 05, 2025

POSITION: Oppose

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) respectfully opposes **SB0468 – Public Middle, High, and Charter Schools – Start Time for Instruction.**

SB0468 Summary

SB0468 mandates that Maryland public middle schools and high schools may not start the school day earlier than 8 am and 8:30 am respectively.

Testimony

MSDE opposes SB0468 due to its significant operational and a fiscal impact on LEAs. The impact of limiting the start time of middle and high schools will increase the costs of transportation provided by the LEA and/or through contracts. By moving the start of these grades to a later time, the activities that students attend after school such as clubs, sports, or other extracurricular activities would be pushed later into the evening hours. Students who work after school may also be impacted.

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must consider many variables when determining the start and end times for the school day. These include school location, geographic dispersion of the school population, coordination of school buses for general education and special education students and plans for school activities that may occur before or after the regular school day. By moving the start times for middle and high school students to a later time, more school buses will be on the road during peak traffic times during morning and afternoon rush hours. Additionally, some families rely on older students to care for younger siblings before or after school. This may be more difficult if high schools dismiss later than elementary or middle schools. Changing the start time for the middle and high school grade bands will have an impact on elementary schools, as the LEA must manage transportation schedules for all grades.

Many LEAs have studied options for start times that take into consideration the available research, the needs of students, the geography of the county, and the demands of providing extra-curricular activities, including travel for interscholastic athletics. These efforts typically include key stakeholders such as parents, so that solutions are tailored to local needs.

Lastly, if LEAs seek a waiver to these start times under the law, they would appeal to the State Board of Education, and the Board would hear their case and make waiver decisions. State Board members do not have transportation and traffic expertise which does not set them up well to make such waiver decisions.

We respectfully request that you consider this information as you deliberate **SB0468**. Please contact Akilah Alleyne, Ph.D. (Executive Director of Government Affairs), akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov, for any additional information.