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Budget and Taxation Committee

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony **Senator Joanne C. Benson** **Support of SB468:** **Public Middle, High, and Charter Schools - Start Time for Instruction**

Good afternoon, Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee. I am here not just to testify, but to show my unwavering support of Senate Bill 0468, which addresses the start times for public middle, high, and charter schools.

As a Long-term Legislator, former Principal, and former Educator. I can honestly testify that I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact of early school start times on students' overall well-being and academic performance. SB0468 is a critical piece of legislation that aims to improve the health and academic success of our students by mandating later start times for schools. Beginning in the 2027-2028 school year, this bill requires all public middle schools to start no earlier than 8:00 a.m. and all public high schools to start no earlier than 8:30 a.m.

Research has consistently shown that later start times align better with the natural sleep patterns of adolescents, leading to improved mental and physical health, better academic performance, and reduced absenteeism. In my experience, I have seen how chronic sleep deprivation can negatively impact students' ability to concentrate, retain information, and engage in classroom activities. By implementing later start times, SB0468 will help ensure that our students are well-rested and ready to learn, ultimately leading to a more successful and productive educational experience.

Moreover, this bill initiates a vital public service campaign to spotlight the critical need for sufficient sleep and the newly established school start times. By educating parents, students, and the community about the lasting benefits of this change, we can foster a smoother transition and promote a healthier future for our children.

In conclusion, I urge the committee to support SB0468 and take this important step towards improving the health and academic success of our students. Thank you for your time and consideration.