

Chairman Feldman and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to participate in today's hearing and thank you for your attention to a topic that is of critical importance.

My name is Aysheh Abuarqub. I am a freshman psychology major at Loyola University Maryland studying adolescent sleep. I have attended Maryland public schools for fourteen years. I attended Worcester County Public Schools for preschool through seventh grade and Baltimore County Public Schools for grades eight through twelve. If you asked any one of my teachers at any given time to describe me they may say something like "thoughtful", "inquisitive", or "chronically-late." As far back as elementary school I can remember being excited about my education, and eager to learn but always facing a roadblock in the mornings. And not for lack of trying. I've tried countless sleep hygiene routines, alarm clocks, and accountability systems to get myself out to bed and into school on time. When I've prioritized my sleep so that I could get to school on time I've found myself falling behind in my school work and social life. When I've prioritized my academics and tried getting to school on time through sheer willpower I've found myself unable to focus and having chronic illness flare ups which have left me vomiting in the mornings and late to class yet again.

Early school start times have been detrimental to my health and education, and I am not alone in this struggle. It is often said that we are all forced to live in the morning person's world, but with early school start times we are forcing children to live in an adult's world. High schoolers need around ten hours of sleep per night and current early school start times are robbing them of that opportunity and therefore their health in this crucial stage of development.

Let's consider an ideal day in the life for an average high school student in Baltimore City. This student takes public transit to school like 41% of their peers, since they don't qualify for school sponsored transportation and their family doesn't own a car. So they leave the house at 6:54 am to make it to school *just* in time to be saved by the bell and make it to class in time. And this is if all goes according to plan and the bus or train makes it to their stops reliably, as scheduled, and with no mishaps along the way, which we all know is often not the case. So what time does this student need to wake up? Well assuming again that they are perfectly average, they would need about half an hour to go to the bathroom, shower, and eat breakfast before going to school, meaning they need to get up bright and early at 6:04 am.

So what time would they need to go to sleep? 8 p.m. This gives them five hours between the end of their school day and bed time to do the following tasks:

1. Commute back home: about half an hour
2. Have dinner: about another half hour if they're not helping with cooking, clean up, or setting the table
3. Get the daily recommended amount of exercise: at least one hour

4. Complete any homework: about 1 hour is how much is *reportedly* assigned (though we all know that this is often not the case) however following the assumption that this statistic is accurate when considering the average high school students attention span is only about half an hour, this “hour of homework” could easily turn into an hour and half when accounting for necessary breaks.
5. Complete their nightly routine: this could take anywhere from thirty minutes to an hour.

So, totaling that all up, on a perfect day if all goes according to plan our “average” healthy student is left with thirty to sixty spare minutes in their day to socialize, connect with family, complete any chores, and do any hobbies.

Life does not look this way. Things go wrong. Buses get delayed, students get sick, they get distracted, they need to socialize, clean their rooms, take care of their pets, and above all students need to sleep. We can adjust our education system for better outcomes all we want but it will never work if we are not accounting for student health. Our current system sets students up to fail and it cannot go on. We must treat our students with respect, and give them time to lead healthy lives. I urge you to pass Senate Bill 468 so that we can give our students a fighting chance for their education and health. Thank you.