

**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the Maryland House of Delegates
Ways and Means Committee - For the Hearing on
Public Middle, High, and Charter Schools - Start Time for Instruction – HB-1015
February 24, 2025
SUPPORT**

Free State PTA (FSPTA) represents over 70,000 volunteer members and families in over 500 public schools. As the state's premier and largest child advocacy organization, Free State PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education. This bill aligns with Free State PTA's principles for legislative action. ***We are here to ask for a favorable report for House Bill 1015.***

In support of our principles for legislative action, enacting safe and healthy bell times for teenagers aligns with the recommendations of U.S. Surgeon General, American Academy of Pediatrics, Centers for Disease Control, and the National PTA resolution. It is difficult for students to learn when school starts an hour before their biological clock is set to "wake." It's also hard for them to grow and be healthy. Sleep deprivation impairs attention, memory, and judgment.

This Bill follows legislative support in 2016 for the Orange Ribbon for Healthy School Hours Bill, which established a voluntary incentive program to encourage school districts to implement healthy school hours. However, to date, no schools have applied for the Orange Ribbon incentive, despite the best of intentions of this body encouraging them to implement secondary school hours consistent with science to achieve better outcomes for students in terms of achievement and lifetime health. Decades of research show that too early bell times lead to mood swings, obesity, substance use, immune disorders, depression, suicide, risky behaviors, absenteeism and car accidents.

When bell times are delayed these problems have been shown to decrease. Later bell times improve mood, performance in class and on tests, sports performance, truancy, tardiness, drop-out rates; and teens get more sleep per night. Because the vast majority of school districts in Maryland have not established hours that meet the needs of our adolescents, it is essential that the House act on this bill. This bill is one of three Free State PTA Priority Bills this legislative session.

Free state PTA believes this bill is vital to ensuring the wellbeing and success of children and therefore strongly urges that this committee issue a favorable report on HB 1015.

Testimony is presented on behalf of

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