



**Board of Education
of Howard County**

Jolene Mosley, *Chair*

Linfeng Chen, Ph.D., *Vice Chair*

Andrea Chamblee, Esq.

Jennifer Swickard Mallo

Jacky McCoy

Meg Ricks

Antonia Watts

James Obasiolu
Student Member

William J. Barnes
*Superintendent,
Secretary/Treasurer*

**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland House of Delegates,
Ways and Means Committee
February 24, 2025**

HB1015: UNFAVORABLE

Public Middle, High, and Charter Schools - Start Time for Instruction

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) opposes **Public Middle, High, and Charter Schools - Start Time for Instruction** as a mandate on local school system operations that has extensive fiscal impacts without dedicated funding.

HB1015 requires all Maryland middle schools to begin instruction after 8 a.m. and all Maryland high schools to begin after 8:30 a.m. starting with the 2027-2028 school year. In instances where a school has a compelling reason to require a different start time, the bill authorizes the Maryland State Board of Education to grant a waiver to the school to begin instruction earlier. A school cannot, however, use a lack of available funding as a compelling reason.

In Howard County, school start times are staggered in order to utilize a smaller pool of buses that make school runs multiple times throughout the morning hours in order to have all students in the classroom by 9:25 a.m. HCPSS' [earliest school start time](#) is currently 7:50 a.m. for all high schools and some middle schools. The remaining middle schools currently start at 8:30 a.m.

Many school systems throughout the state and nation are working to address the core issue of early school start times. Research by organizations such as the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) recognize "insufficient sleep in adolescents as an important public health issue that significantly affects the health and safety, as well as the academic success, of our nation's middle and high school students." The Board supports healthy school start times and continues to move towards that goal. Maintaining local control over the exact school start times, however, is imperative for operational and financial flexibility of school systems.

HB1015 would become an unfunded mandate for additional buses as the requirements of the bill would significantly compress the schedule. Limited bus contractor availability also doesn't support the volume of buses that would be needed.

Alternatives to compressing schedules including moving elementary start times earlier and middle or high schools after 9 a.m. These options have been previously discussed by the Board on multiple occasions, dating back to 2015, with community input largely against moving high schools later than middle or elementary schools. Considerations for later high school start times include the availability of older siblings to provide childcare, high schoolers working in after school day care facilities, as well as the impact on athletics and extracurricular activities. As a legislative platform, the Board opposes legislative measures such as HB1015 that diminish its ability to respond to its constituency on issues currently under its authority, as local boards must be accountable directly to their citizenry.

For these reasons, we urge an UNFAVORABLE report on HB1015 from this Committee.