

Witness Testimony for SB0103

Senator Benson

Feb. 4, 2026

Position: Favorable

My name is Robyn Fielding-Jones, and I recently obtained my BA in psychology at Loyola University Maryland where I conducted sleep health research for four years. I am writing to express my strong support for bill SB0103, which would require later school start times for public middle and high schools and charter schools. I first want to thank Senator Benson for supporting the Public Middle, High, and Charter Schools Start Time for Instruction bill, your advocacy for educational improvement and prioritization of student needs is greatly appreciated.

Scientific research shows that during puberty, teenagers' natural sleep cycles shift, making it difficult to fall asleep early. As a result, many students experience chronic sleep deprivation, which harms academic performance, memory and concentration, mental health, and increases risky behaviors, including car accidents. As such, this issue is not just a student or school dilemma but rather an issue affecting the entire community. SB0103 addresses this by setting minimum start times of 8:00 a.m. for middle schools and 8:30 a.m. for high schools. The bill aligns school schedules with established research on teens' biological clocks while also providing flexibility for district-based logistical challenges.

My support for this bill is also influenced by my own experiences as a middle and high school student in Salisbury, MD. Like many teenagers, I struggled to fall asleep before midnight and had to be up around 6 a.m. for school. I usually only slept 4-5 hours a night, but was at school for close to 10 hours a day because of extracurriculars. I often felt fatigued and struggled to stay focused in classes which impacted my academic performance and mental health. These experiences have shown me how demanding early school start times can be for students and why policies better aligning school schedules with adolescent sleep needs are so important.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on bill SB0103. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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