

February 3, 2026

Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee  
Annapolis, MD

Re: **SB 103** (Benson) Public Middle, High, and Charter Schools – Start Time for Instruction **SUPPORT**

Dear Members of the Maryland Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee:

I write to support Senate Bill 103, which would set important health-related standards for school start times for middle (8:00 a.m.) and high schools (8:30 a.m.) across the state of Maryland.

As a psychologist and researcher in pediatric behavioral sleep medicine, a nationally certified school psychologist, and a Baltimore resident for over a decade, I am passionate about the intersection of sleep health and equitable access to safe, supportive school communities. We as constituents and you as legislators have a wonderful opportunity to support policy change that can improve the health, emotional well-being, academic success, and safety for the many young people and families engaged in school communities across the state.

We exist in a largely sleep-deprived society, despite sleep's importance to our health and functioning. There has been much advancement in sleep science in the past few decades. In this mounting research, the evidence that moving adolescent school start times to a healthier, later hour benefits young people, caregivers, and educators, cannot be ignored.

As you may know, during adolescence, there is a biological shift in the sleep-wake cycle and difference in sleep drive such that these young people have difficulty falling asleep until later in the evening, then have a need to sleep later into the morning in order to get enough sleep. When adolescents wake up early in the morning, it is typically because they must due to their academic environments and expectations. As a consequence of waking early, they often do not get enough sleep and can have difficulty functioning. The good news is that you have the unique opportunity to help given this potential policy change.

Starting schools later for young people has not only been shown to benefit sleep directly (that is, more sleep and feeling as though they have had enough sleep), but also daytime functioning across domains (for example, feeling less sleepy during the day, academic performance, emotional well-being, and improved public safety in the form of fewer car accidents). Having a healthy start time can also impact positively impact the lives of parents and caregivers, as well as the lives of educators.

I have worked in schools and understand that change such as this at a systems level is not easy. It takes effort and interest from multiple angles. Yet, that potential challenge should not preclude the fact that all young people deserve equitable access to a healthy school environment – including sleep health. What a great opportunity we have to support policy change that structures a system so critical to an adolescent's success in a way that supports and protects their health. Educators, family members, and community stakeholders often have high expectations of these young, growing people. Please support Maryland and in HB 189 to reduce barriers to success by ensuring safe and healthy school start times. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

*Erin S. Leichman*

Erin S. Leichman, Ph.D.  
Psychologist, Nationally Certified School Psychologist  
Diplomate in Behavioral Sleep Medicine  
Senior Research Scientist  
[leichma@sju.edu](mailto:leichma@sju.edu)