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RE MD SB 103 Public Middle, High, and Charter Schools -Start Time for Instruction (Benson) – SUPPORT

Dear Members of the Maryland General Assembly,

I am writing on behalf of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) to urge your support for SB 103 which would require, beginning in the 2028-2029 school year, each public middle school and each public high school to begin instruction not earlier than 8 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. respectively. This is consistent with the goals of the AASM position statement on later school start times.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 7 out of 10 high school students in the United States do not get the recommended 8–10 hours of sleep on school nights. This chronic sleep deprivation is linked to a host of negative outcomes, including diminished academic performance, increased absenteeism, and lower graduation rates. Research consistently shows that students whose schools adopt later start times experience better attendance, higher grades, and improved likelihood of graduating on time.

The benefits of adequate sleep extend beyond academics. Later school start times have been shown to improve students' physical health, reducing rates of illness, obesity, and diabetes. Delaying start times also helps decrease the number of teen car crashes, a leading cause of death among adolescents. Mental health outcomes are significantly better as well: students report lower rates of depression, anxiety, and even suicide. Additionally, teens who get sufficient sleep are less likely to engage in risky behaviors such as substance use and are better able to manage stress.

Recent findings from the 2025 AASM parent survey reveal that parents observe negative impacts of insufficient sleep on their children, including difficulties with concentration, mood, and overall well-being. Proper rest also enhances athletic performance, allowing students to excel both in the classroom and on the field.

Implementing later school start times is not only an evidence-based approach to supporting adolescent health and achievement but also yields substantial economic benefits. A 2017 study by Hafner et al. in *Sleep Health* estimated that delaying school start times could contribute billions of dollars to the U.S. economy over time by improving student performance and future productivity.

In summary, later school start times are a practical, science-backed policy that will foster healthier, safer, and more successful students, while also benefiting families and communities. I respectfully urge you to support this important legislation and help ensure our youth have every opportunity to thrive.

Sincerely,

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine