

I have received permission from Sam Abed to forward this testimony in support of HB 189.

Sincerely,

Maribel Ibrahim

Subject: Please support Maryland HB189 and SB103

I write in strong support of House Bill 189 and Senate Bill 103, which advance later school start times for middle and high school students across Maryland. This legislation reflects a growing body of research and practical experience demonstrating that aligning school schedules with adolescent development improves educational outcomes while also producing important public safety benefits.

During my tenure as Secretary of the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, I saw firsthand how policies outside the justice system—particularly those related to education and youth development—have a direct and measurable impact on juvenile offending. The science is clear that adolescents experience a natural shift in their circadian rhythms, making early morning start times inconsistent with healthy sleep patterns. As a result, students who start school later show improved attendance, better academic performance, and stronger engagement in school—outcomes that benefit all youth, not just those at risk of system involvement.

From a juvenile justice perspective, the implications are equally compelling. Research and system data consistently show that a significant portion of juvenile violent and disruptive behavior occurs during the late afternoon and early evening hours—particularly in the window immediately after school dismissal and before families return home for the evening. These are the hours when youth are most likely to be unsupervised in the community.

Later school start times help compress this high-risk window by shifting the school day later into the afternoon, thereby increasing structured, supervised time for youth during the hours when delinquent behavior is most likely to occur. This is a prevention strategy that works not by expanding law enforcement or surveillance, but by strengthening routine, pro-social structure in young people's daily lives. In my experience, these are precisely the types of upstream interventions that reduce

system involvement more effectively—and more equitably—than punitive approaches.

HB 189 and SB 103 represent sound public policy: they support student success, promote healthier youth development, and contribute to safer communities, all while avoiding unnecessary justice system costs. Importantly, they do so in a manner consistent with Maryland's long-standing commitment to evidence-based juvenile justice reform and smart prevention.

I commend the sponsors and the General Assembly for considering legislation that recognizes the intersection between education policy and public safety. Based on both the research and my experience leading Maryland's juvenile justice system, I strongly urge favorable consideration of HB 189 and SB 103.

Respectfully submitted,

Sam Abed

Former Secretary

Maryland Department of Juvenile Services