

February 3, 2026

House Ways and Means Committee
Annapolis, MD

Re: **HB 189** (Miller) Public Middle, High, and Charter Schools – Start Time for Instruction **SUPPORT**

Dear Members of the Maryland House Ways and Means Committee:

I write to support House Bill 189, 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, 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 changing 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 differences 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. As a consequence, they can have difficulty functioning in the morning. When adolescents wake up early in the morning, its typically because they have to for their academic environments. The good news is that you have the unique opportunity to help, with this system-level 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 the lives of parents and caregivers, as well as the lives of educators.

All young people deserve equitable access to a healthy school environment – and this includes sleep health. What a great opportunity we have to support policy change that structures a system so critical to their 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.

Sincerely,

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