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**BILL:** House Bill 189  
**TITLE:** Public Middle, High, and Charter Schools - Start Time for Instruction  
**HEARING DATE:** February 5, 2026  
**POSITION:** UNFAVORABLE  
**COMMITTEE:** Ways and Means  
**CONTACT:** Jessica Goff, Governmental Affairs Associate (jgoff@mabe.org)

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all 24 local boards of education in Maryland, respectfully **opposes House Bill 189 Public Middle, High, and Charter Schools - Start Time for Instruction.**

This bill requires, beginning with the 2027-2028 school year, all middle schools in the State to begin instruction no earlier than 8:00 a.m. and all high schools in the State to begin instruction no earlier than 8:30 a.m. The State Board of Education (SBE), by request, may grant waivers from these requirements if they determine that there is a compelling reason for a school to require a different start time. However, a lack of funding to implement the new start times is not a compelling reason for a waiver. Additionally, beginning in the 2026-2027 school year, each local board of education and public charter school must implement a public information campaign to raise awareness of the later start times for middle and high schools, as specified. If requested, SBE must assist with these campaigns. The bill makes additional technical and conforming changes.

Although MABE appreciates the intent of HB 189, MABE firmly believes that decisions regarding public school start times are best left to the local school boards who are most responsive to the communities they serve. It is important to note that local school systems already have the authority to adjust start times as needed and each school system should be allowed the discretion to make decisions that best support its students, families, and communities.

Additionally, there would be significant increases in costs for local school systems and counties in order to restructure an entire transportation system to meet the requirements of HB 189. For example, local school systems would have to purchase more buses, hire more bus drivers and support personnel (e.g., mechanics), and purchase more storage facilities for the buses. This would also result in substantial increases in annual costs to maintain the size of the bus fleet. However, there is no funding mechanism attached to the requirements in HB 189. For these reasons, MABE opposes HB 189 and kindly requests an unfavorable report.