



Maryland State Chapter health, safety and equity in education

December 5, 2016

Good Afternoon Maryland Board of Education:

I am Lisa VanBuskirk, Chapter Leader of Start School Later Maryland, one of 84 chapters in 25 states, of a Maryland-based, national non-profit, committed to helping communities and school systems work together to adjust school hours to those healthy, safe, and developmentally appropriate for all ages. I am also the Chapter Leader for Anne Arundel County and have colleagues leading chapters in Howard, Baltimore, and Montgomery Counties. It is no coincidence that these four counties are in various stages of analyzing how to implement safer and healthier school hours, or have made a small change already. I founded the Maryland chapter to address the early middle and high school start times in the rest of the state, following the passage of the **Orange Ribbon Bill for Healthy School Hours** last spring by the state legislature.

I believe that MSDE should be releasing a letter to all the Superintendents in the next week or so, if they haven't already, outlining the qualifications to achieve one of the recognition levels under the Orange Ribbon Bill and providing additional research and resources on best practices for such a significant change, including some provided by my organization. I hope the Orange Ribbon recognition, and the lessons learned from those Superintendents across the nation who have successfully lead this change, will inspire more Maryland school superintendents to make this necessary adjustment. Some Maryland counties already have healthy and safe school hours for some of their grade levels. By my criteria, Garrett County has the healthiest school hours for all of its students. A table of the wide spectrum of school opening bells across the state is provided to you with my testimony.

The most compelling reason for schools to adjust school hours to those that meet the recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association, and U.S. Centers for Disease Control, that middle and high school should start no earlier than 8:30 a.m., are the health benefits that stem from the opportunity for increased sleep. **Only 23% of Maryland high school students are achieving a minimum of 8 hours of sleep on weeknights that their growing bodies need¹.** Opening bells after 8:30 a.m. at least provide an opportunity for increased sleep, of which there is otherwise none, except in relatively few instances across the state.

But if schools are unwilling to address public health issues through changes in education policy, perhaps the negative impact their early opening bells have on chronic absenteeism, graduation rates, and test scores will open their eyes to the need to alter the status quo. A fellow volunteer took the data from the MSDE Factbook and crunched some numbers from Charles and Washington Counties, where there are both early and late starting high school and middle schools, respectively. **There IS a difference with chronic absentees, graduation rates, and 8th grade test scores, between the early and later starting Maryland schools, with later starting schools besting their peers in all three categories.** A copy of this analysis is included as an enclosure to my testimony. The significant differences are demonstrated for: all students, students on free-and-reduced meal plans, and minorities. I concede there are other factors that also affect absenteeism, graduation rates, and test scores from school to school within a county, but early opening bell times is vastly under-appreciated for its negative impact. MSDE obviously has access to more comprehensive data, so I encourage you to ask them for similar analysis of student achievement measures,

¹ 2014 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey Question 88

<http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/ccdcpc/Reports/Documents/2014%20YRBS%20Reports/2014MDH%20Summary%20Tables.pdf>

relative to school start times.

Governor Hogan’s executive order for the first day of school is obviously a big topic in the state this year. For years, Start School Later has been told that mandates on healthy school hours can’t occur because it takes away the local autonomy of school boards. I took the liberty of writing him a letter, a copy of which is provided to you, outlining how some of his arguments for delaying the first day of school, like state economics and student health, could be adjusted to justify an executive order delaying the first bell of school. While naturally, neither he nor his staff has yet responded, it remains a valid future discussion point. For as the **2014 joint report between the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and MSDE** so eloquently noted,

“Any consideration of a statewide mandate for a later school start time must consider the unique needs of each of the 24 local jurisdictions. However, in preserving the status quo where by school start times are a matter for each local jurisdiction, the state risks letting local resistance trump a strong body of scientific evidence that sleep is critical to health and academic achievement.”

I would like to extend an invitation to all of you to attend the “Adolescent Sleep, Health, and School Start Times” conference, which will be held in late April in Washington, D.C. where this strong body of scientific evidence and lessons learned from schools systems who have implemented healthy school hours will be discussed.

<https://www.schoolstarttimeconference.org/>

Thank you,



Lisa VanBuskirk

Chapter Leader

Start School Later Maryland and Start School Later Anne Arundel County

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- Enclosures: (1) 2015-2016 Public School Hours in Maryland
(2) School Start Times for Maryland Teens: Absenteeism-Graduation Rates-Standardized Test Scores
(3) Start School Later Maryland Letter to Governor Hogan dated October 17, 2016



The poster features a blue header with a white circular logo containing a stylized head and a heartbeat line. Below the logo, the text reads "ADOLESCENT SLEEP, HEALTH, AND SCHOOL START TIMES THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE". To the left of the logo is a photograph of a young woman with long dark hair, wearing a blue and white striped shirt, sitting at a desk and looking thoughtful with her hand to her forehead. Below the header, the poster is divided into two columns. The left column is titled "An Interactive Conference Bringing Together:" and lists several groups: Education Policy Makers, Leading Sleep Experts, Administrators/Teachers/Staff, Health Care Professionals, Community Advocates, and Transportation Experts. Below this list, it says "Networking, State-of-the-Science, Implementation Strategies". The right column features the slogan "SAVE THE DATE" in large, bold, blue letters, with "THE" in smaller letters between "SAVE" and "DATE". Below the slogan, it states "WASHINGTON DC APRIL 27-28, 2017". At the bottom of the right column, it says "FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: www.schoolstarttimeconference.org". At the very bottom of the poster, a red banner contains the text "SPONSORED BY RAND Corporation, Yale Dept. of Pediatrics, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Start School Later Inc".



2015-2016 Public School Hours in Maryland

RED = (1) Middle and high school start times that do not meet the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation that such schools not start before 8:30 a.m. and/or (2) the school start time is earlier than 8 a.m., which the Maryland Department of Health & Mental Hygiene has asked the Maryland State Board of Education to consider establishing as the earliest permitted school start time for K-12 students.

GREEN = Start times of 8:30 a.m. or later for middle and high schools and/or elementary school starts of 8 a.m. or later.

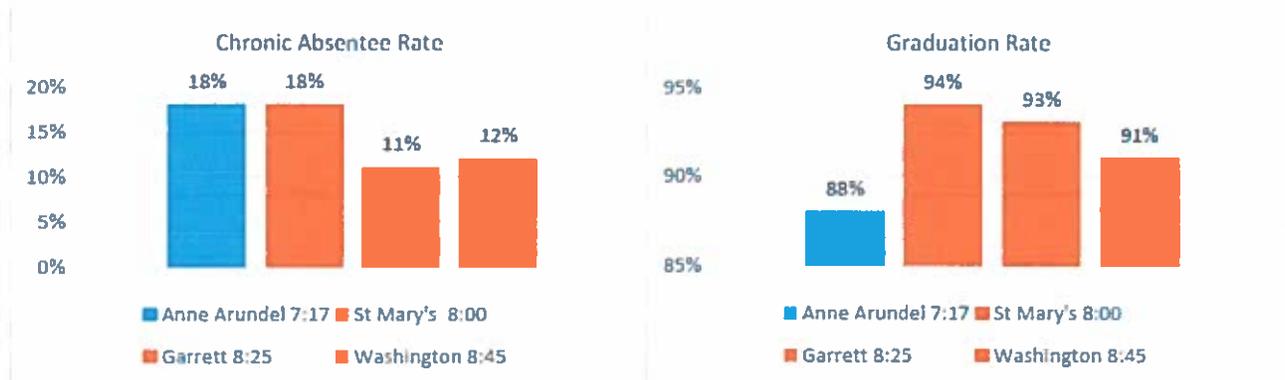
* The Orange Ribbon Healthy School Hours Certification program was signed into law in April 2016 and will be implemented starting with the 2017-2018 school year. The certification has three levels, from lowest to highest: Limited, Honorable Mention, Commended

County/School District	HS start time or start ranges	MS start time or start ranges	ES start time or start ranges	Does the district currently qualify for a Healthy School Hours Orange Ribbon Recognition?*
Alleghany County	7:40	7:40	8:00 to 8:45	
Anne Arundel County	7:17	7:55 to 9:10	8:00 to 9:20	Yes, since the district put together a Start Time Committee and is discussing plans to change hours.
Baltimore City	7:45 to 9:00	7:45 to 9:00	7:45 to 9:00	
Baltimore County	7:10 to 7:45	7:40 to 8:30	8:35 to 9:20	
Calvert County	7:25 to 7:40	7:22 to 8:25	8:30	
Caroline County	7:50	7:40	9:00	
Carroll County	7:30	8:25 to 8:35	7:45 to 9:30	
Cecil County	7:40	7:50-8:10	9:00	
Charles County	7:25 to 8:05	7:45 to 8:50	8:30 to 9:30	
Dorchester County	7:50 to 8:15	7:55 to 8:05	8:30 to 9:00	
Frederick County	7:30	8:00	8:20 to 9:00	
Garrett County	8:25*	8:30	8:15 to 8:40	Yes! Garrett County has safe and healthy school hours!
Harford County	7:30	8:15	9 to 9:30	
Howard County	7:25	7:40 to 8:25	8:35 to 9:25	Yes, since the district put together a Start Time Committee and is discussing plans to change hours.
Kent County	7:45	8:40	8:00 to 9:00	
Montgomery County	7:45	7:55 to 8:15	9:00 to 9:25	Yes, since the district moved start times later than they were before — but there's more work to do.
Prince George's County	7:45 to 9:30	7:45 to 9:30	7:45 to 9:15	
Queen Anne's County	7:35	7:45	7:30 to 8:55	
Somerset County	7:30	7:20	8:00	
St Mary's County	8:00	7:20 to 8	8:25 to 9:00	
Talbot County	7:45 to 7:50	7:45 to 7:50	8:40	
Washington County	8:45	7:20 to 8:45	7:30 to 9:15	
Wicomico County	7:45	7:45 to 9:15	8:15 to 9:15	
Worcester County	7:48 to 8:07	7:30 to 8:00	7:45 to 8:30	

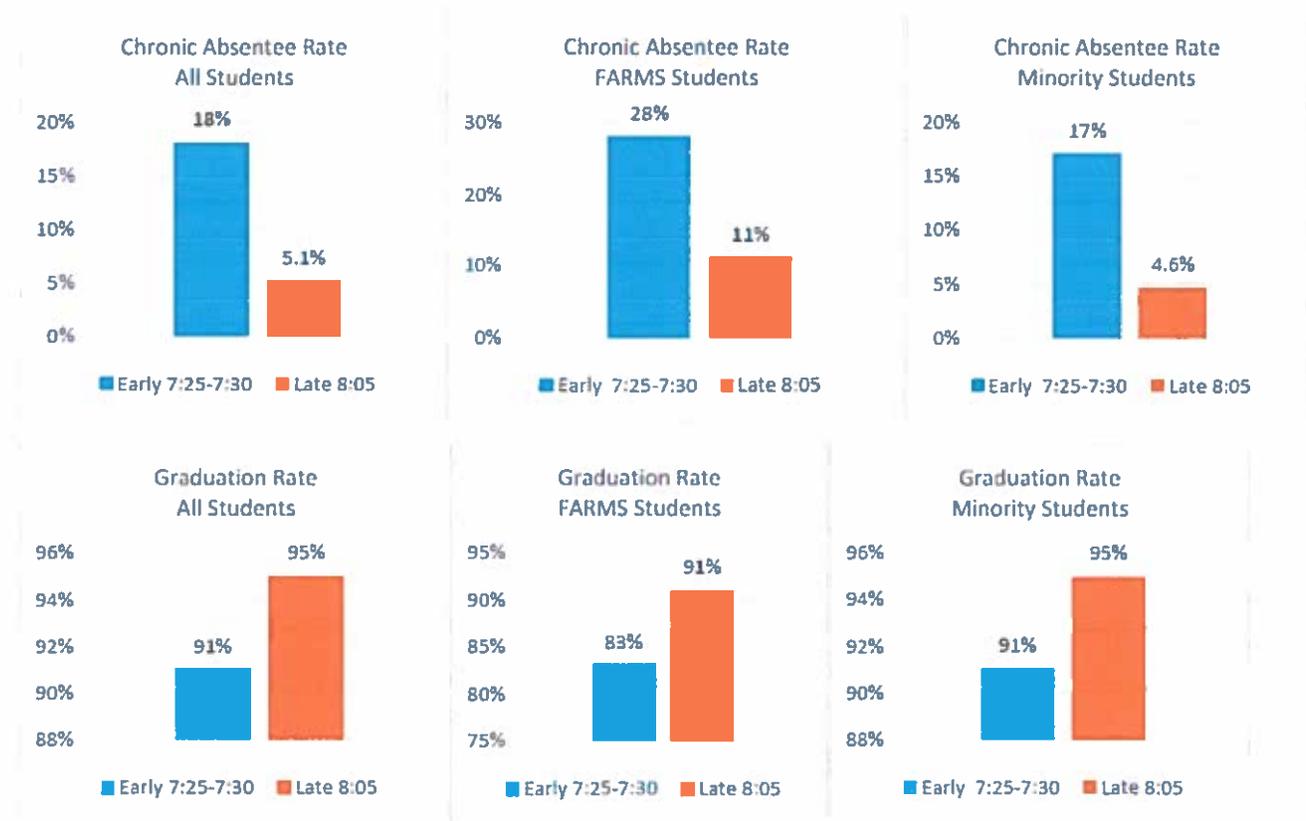
School Start Times for Maryland Teens

Absenteeism | Graduation Rates | Standardized Test Scores

With a 7:17 a.m. first bell, Anne Arundel County has the earliest starting high schools in Maryland.



Comparing early and late high school start times *within* Charles County*

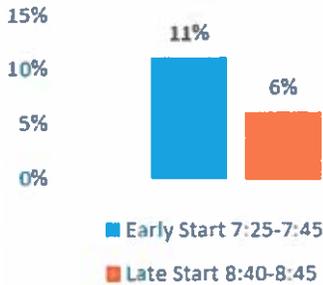


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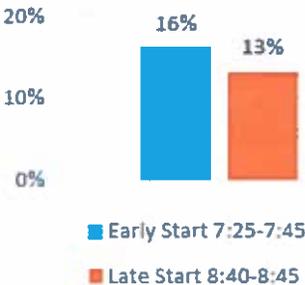


Comparing early and late middle school start times *within* Washington County*

Chronic Absentee Rate
All Students



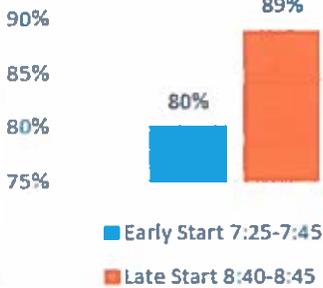
Chronic Absentee Rate
FARMS Students



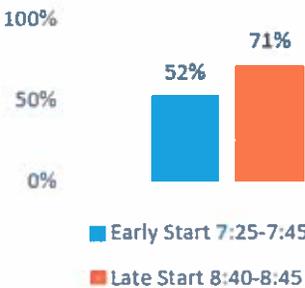
Chronic Absentee Rate
Minority Students



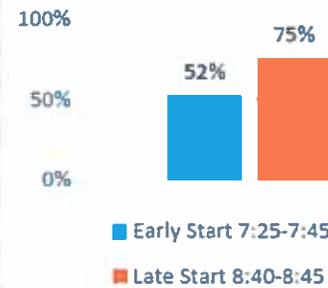
8th Grade MSA Advanced +
Proficient - All Students



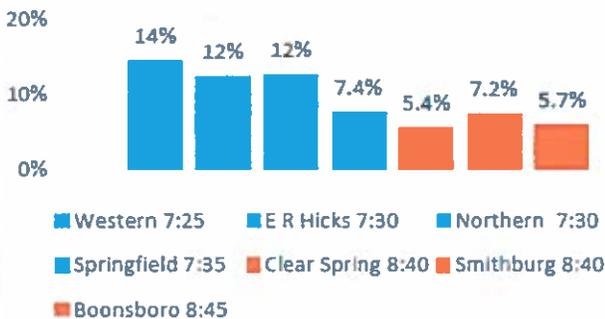
8th Grade MSA Advanced +
Proficient - FARMS Students



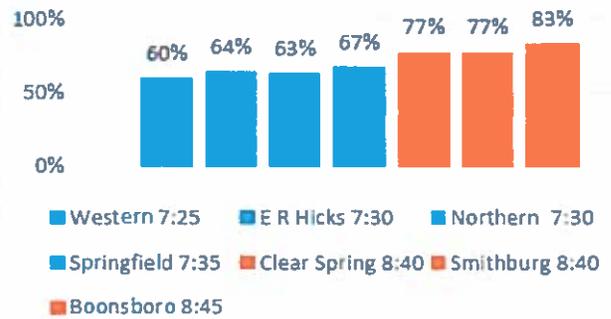
8th Grade MSA Advanced +
Proficient - Minority Students



Chronic Absentee Rate by School



8th Grade MSA % Advanced + Proficient



NOTES

- School start times were obtained from bell schedules posted online by each school district for the 2016-2017 school year. Performance/attendance data was collected from the Maryland Report Card at <http://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/>
- As defined by the Maryland Report Card, a student who is chronically absent has missed 20 or more days of school in an academic year.
- FARMS students (students whose families meet "Free and Reduced Meal Standards") were assessed to account for socio-economic differences that may impact attendance and/or performance in school.

* Charles and Washington counties were chosen because they had markedly different start times within the same district and the school bell schedules were readily available online.



Maryland State Chapter health, safety and equity in education

Governor Larry Hogan
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401-1925

October 17, 2016

Dear Governor Hogan:

I am writing to follow up on my May 3, 2016 letter to you, in light of your recent Executive Order regarding the day Maryland schools start and end. **This letter is in regards to the *time of day* schools start.** As you know, local school boards have the authority to determine bell schedules/start times for their schools, similar to school calendars. **I am hoping that you and your staff will consider a similarly dramatic executive order regarding setting healthy and safe school hour requirements.**

The State of Maryland has similar interests in school hours as in school days. As I read the first few paragraphs of your Executive Order, a few lines caught my eye. "The State has a particularly compelling interest in the physical and psychological well being of minors" and "This policy imposes unacceptable public health and safety risks upon those students".

Contrary to the recommendations of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Medical Association (AMA), and a wealth of other public health groups, the majority of Maryland's middle and high schools start well before 8:30 a.m. Indeed, as early as 7:17 a.m. in your home county of Anne Arundel. The reason for the public health recommendations for school start times is directly correlated to the many adverse physical and psychological impacts and health and safety risks for adolescents with chronic sleep deprivation and early school start times. **Only 23.8% of Maryland's students are getting a minimum of 8 hours of sleep each night, rendering them chronically sleep deprived (2014 Youth Risk Behavior Survey).**

Adolescents are subject to sleep deprivation as the result of changing/delayed sleep patterns and the early time at which they must catch buses/walk to school (as early as 5:23 a.m. in Anne Arundel County). Among the **public health risks** to teens from early school start times: obesity, eating disorders, diabetes, athletic injuries, substance abuse, depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts. Among the **safety risks** to the students with early school start times: drowsy driving (equivalent to drunk driving), risky behaviors, and a lack of visibility of students waiting for buses/walking to school before dawn on dark streets. **Equally, if not more serious, health and safety concerns as the lack of air conditioning in schools in August, as cited in your Executive Order.**

I also noted with interest the statement "This policy has placed a significant competitive burden on Maryland's economy..." Economists have calculated a minimum of a 9:1 benefit-to-cost ratio and increased lifetime earnings, for adjusting school hours to developmentally appropriate ones. Furthermore, **chronic sleep deprivation in teens is correlated to decreased academic performance/graduation rates and increased absenteeism/tardiness, which both have economic impacts on Maryland.** The Enclosure is an analysis of the chronic absenteeism, graduation rates, and standardized test scores of early versus late start middle and high schools within Washington and Charles Counties,

respectively. The difference is even more dramatic for minority and free-and-reduced-meal populations within those counties.

Early school start times hold back our students from their full potential and limit Maryland's potential as well. Just across the Potomac, there are school systems with healthy and safe school hours, against whom Maryland students must compete, even though those Virginia students have the opportunity for a full night worth of additional sleep per week, as a result of their healthier school schedules. **Maryland concedes the competitive edge of rested students consistently to other jurisdictions. Maryland needs "innovative school schedules" as it relates to school hours for all students, but disadvantaged students will benefit even more (twice as much by some estimates) from later middle and high school start times.**

Making an adjustment to school hours sounds like a win-win situation doesn't it then, with well-documented health, safety, academic, and economic benefits? Though a few counties have developmentally appropriate school hours (i.e. Garrett County for both middle and high school), why have not more school boards not done so? As the 2014 joint study between the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) eloquently noted "...in preserving the status quo whereby school start times are a matter for each local jurisdiction, the state risks letting local resistance trump a strong body of scientific evidence that sleep is critical to health and academic achievement." The fear of change by both the public and educational institutions themselves stifles the conversation.

MSDE is currently preparing guidance it will issue by the end of the calendar year to school superintendents and boards of education regarding applying for Orange Ribbon for Healthy School Hours recognition, which you signed into law in April. While we are optimistic that the Orange Ribbon will encourage school systems to change, it may not be sufficient to inspire the kind of change that will make a widespread difference in Maryland's future. **Maryland was a national leader with its 2014 and 2016 legislation on school start times. I am hopeful that with your attention to the matter, it will continue to be.**

I welcome the opportunity to speak with your staff regarding this issue further and sincerely hope that you or Lieutenant Governor Rutherford will be involved next fall in the awarding the first Orange Ribbon to the few counties already eligible for one of the recognition levels.

Sincerely,



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Enclosure: School Start Times for Maryland Teens: Absenteeism-Graduation Rates-Standardized Test Scores