



## Anne Arundel County Chapter | Maryland health, safety and equity in education

Election Candidate School Hours Questionnaire

Please return to: [sslaaco@gmail.com](mailto:sslaaco@gmail.com)

Candidate Name: Kimberly McCoy Burns

The American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association, American Academy of Sleep Medicine, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other public health groups recommend that middle and high school start no earlier than 8:30 a.m. These experts base their recommendation on numerous studies that connect changing adolescent sleep patterns and early school start times to lower academic achievement, negative physical and mental health conditions, and risky behaviors among teens.

A 2014 Start Time Task Force by Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) recommended several potential options to improve school hours, and in February 2015, the County Council unanimously passed Resolution 6-15 urging AACPS to follow the recommendations of its 2014 Task Force and “expeditiously take measures to establish safe and healthy high school hours for all students.”

Despite shifting start times by 13-15 minutes this year, AACPS and the Board of Education have thus far been unable to fully implement safe, healthy, and age-appropriate school hours. Therefore, Start School Later Anne Arundel County asks:

1. Will you sign Start School Later's 2017 petition at  
<https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/establish-safe-and-healthy-school-hours-in-anne-arundel-county> ? **I already have signed the petition**

If No, will you sign it? If you won't sign it, please explain why.

2. Based on the research that later middle and high school start times increase graduation rates and decrease absenteeism, with disadvantaged students benefiting the most from age-appropriate school hours, do you feel the current school hours affects the County's ability to be a leader in K-12 education for all students?

**I certainly do and I feel very strongly about this.**

3. What hours would you define as healthy, safe, and age appropriate for:

Elementary School: **8:30 a.m.-9:55 a.m.**

Middle School: **8:25 a.m.-9:40 a.m.**

High School: **8:30 a.m.**

4. In your prior experience and positions, what have you done to ensure all Anne Arundel County Public School students (K-12) have healthy, safe, and age appropriate school hours?

**I am an advocate for children coming to school ready to learn—this means mentally, physically and emotionally. Add onto the classroom pressures the social pressures of the school environment and I believe children need to be prepared each and every day to face rigorous challenges. Both the mental and emotional component of children arriving at school prepared for the day and ready to learn are derived—at least in part—from habits formed early in life that are healthy, rationale and disciplined and in their best interest. Especially in today's environment, more attention needs to be paid to making sure we give our children every advantage we can to succeed in school at all levels.**

**As an attorney, early in my career, I practiced school law in the course of my general law practice. I advocated on behalf of a number of children who were simply overtaxed and, I believe, exhausted by the rigors of an early morning schedule combined with the pressures of a full day's performance at school. I believe, at a minimum, this sheer exhaustion at least could be mitigated with more sensible start times and result in more productive students and better functioning classrooms.**

5. In your elected position, what will you do to ensure healthy and safe school hours for all of Anne Arundel County Public School Students? Please be specific: Resolutions, recommendations, funding requests, educational outreach, implementation efforts, etc.

**I believe this is an issue where the county councilperson can and should take a leadership role. I would like to see legislation pass to require a periodic review of school start times every four years by a committee established through the county code (a formal commission similar to the Kirwan Commission for instance). This review would focus on addressing issues**

like absenteeism, tardiness, and grade performance as well as innovative ways to address some of the challenges that befall late start time proposals. It would require stakeholder outreach which is a role, frankly, the councilperson together with Board of Education representatives, could and should jointly conduct. Over time, this study could provide the data needed to make the consistent, educated, effective decisions critical to our children's welfare and development based on factors beyond mere dollars and cents. I suggest requiring the school board to report their findings to the County Executive and County Council with some oversight mechanism for making sure a report is timely submitted and the issues are satisfactorily addressed.

6. What is your timeframe for your actions in Question 5. Please be specific, Fiscal Year, School Year, etc.

**Introduce the proposal in council year 1 (2019) of a four year term, conduct and study in year two (2020) with a report to be issued by the end of the second year/beginning of the third year. That way, if further legislative or administrative action is necessary, there will be time for debate among the council and discussion with the County Executive and school board. After that, any review could be conducted in the second year of every new county council's term. Any changes adopted by the school board would be decided in year three (2021) and implemented then. After 2021, the committee would reconvene in 2023 with suggestions to the council in 2024. The key is providing this review on a consistent basis and constantly working together to review, and when necessary make, the systemic changes that will result in safer and healthier children who are ready to learn in the classroom.**

7. Is there anything else you would like your constituents and future voters to know about your position on safe, healthy, and age-appropriate school hours?

**Yes. From the earliest time in their lives, children are developing the habits and ethics (including work ethics) that will stay with them very likely for the rest of their lives. It is our responsibility as their caregivers, parents, teachers, administrators, doctors and others to make sure these habits are healthy and the learning environment we provide is safe. Our children need a learning environment where they can achieve at maximum potential. With all of the resources (studies, expertise, technology) available today, parents, caregivers and professionals can and should take charge to make sure our children get every advantage they can to achieve their best in school; it sets them on a path of success in life. In the more immediate term, it is also our responsibility to keep our children safe—safe while going to school, safe while in school and safe while coming home. School policies should promote a safe, healthy and productive learning environment for all children and should be evaluated on a consistent, periodic basis. Frustrated, exhausted, and overtaxed children are not**

**learning, and in many cases, may be causing or have the potential to cause other more significant issues in the school environment. Our children deserve the healthiest and safest opportunity to learn we, as a community, can provide and we, as a community, have an obligation to provide no less.**