

SB 328 (Portantino) Start The School Day Later

PURPOSE

The vast majority of public middle and high schools in California and the United States begin at times that are contrary to the sleep-health needs and developmental norms of adolescence.

Too-early school hours routinely deprive students with the sleep that growing brains and bodies require. Sleep-deprivation is a national public health concern with consequences impacting children, families, and the community-at-large.

Restoring traditional school start times — as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Medical Association (AMA), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other medical and education experts — is a practical and necessary solution with broad and immediate benefits for children of all ages.

BACKGROUND

Some middle and high schools start before 7 a.m. Most begin in the 7 a.m. hour. Such early school bells force students to wake and travel to school in the 5 or 6 a.m. hour. With dismissals around 2 p.m., sometimes even earlier, teens are often unsupervised for much of the afternoon.

Until the mid 1970s, students of all ages typically started school closer to 9 a.m. Due to factors including a recession, suburban sprawl, and the consolidation from smaller neighborhood schools to larger centralized ones, the start times of elementary, middle and high schools were staggered in order to save money by re-using the same buses and drivers for multiple runs.

Since then, significant social science and health research has shown that these schedules are out of sync with the biological clocks of adolescents and adults up to age 25, which is a demographic that even includes young teachers.

At the time of pubertal onset, adolescents begin to experience a sleep-wake phase delay (i.e. later sleep onset and wake times), which makes it difficult to fall asleep early enough to get the

required 8.5-9.5 hours of sleep per night when schools start too early.

The resulting sleep deprivation, essentially a chronic "jet lag," has worrisome consequences. In addition to being the least effective time for learning, too-early start times are linked to increased school absences, tardiness and drowsiness in class, lower test scores and graduation rates. Sleep-deprived students are more likely than others to feel hopeless or depressed and have higher rates of suicide ideation and substance use. Teen athletes who get less than 8 hours of sleep per night have higher injury rates. Teens and young adults are involved in more than half of all drowsy driving crashes each year. Meanwhile, no research has shown any benefit to requiring any child, of any age, to start instruction before 8 or 8:30 a.m.

The larger public health and other concerns noted above prove that the status quo cannot stand. If necessary, bus schedules can be adjusted so that elementary school students, who naturally wake earlier in the morning, start school earlier. Afterschool sports and other extracurricular activities can shift as needed.

"To do nothing is to do harm," says Judith Owens, M.D., a neurology professor at Harvard Medical School, director of sleep medicine at Boston Children's Hospital and former director of sleep medicine at Children's National Medical Center.

SUMMARY

SB 328 (Portantino) addresses the need for California public schools to start the middle and high school day at safe, healthy and developmentally appropriate hours ~~for all K-12 students~~ by following the recommendations of the AAP, AMA, CDC and other medical and education experts that:

- No middle or high schools begin before 8:30 a.m.
- ~~No middle or high school student is required to board a bus before 7:30 a.m.~~
- ~~No elementary schools begin before 8:00 a.m.~~
- ~~No elementary school student is required to board a bus before 7 a.m.~~

Returning to later, healthier, safer, evidence-based school hours is a reform that can improve the

health, safety, and academic achievement of students immediately and often at low or even no cost.

EXISTING LAW

While the State sets standards for many aspects of the public school system, including how many days/hours school must be in session annually, what tests must be administered, graduation requirements, etc., local school districts are provided no guidance about what school hours are most appropriate for student safety, health and learning.

When Bill 328 becomes law, California will be the first state in the nation to ensure that its public middle and high school students are being taught at times that allow them to wake at developmentally-appropriate times, not travel to or begin school in the darkness of night, have time to eat breakfast and arrive at school better equipped to learn. California can serve as a leader and model for other states and municipalities to follow.

Action at the state level is needed to mobilize local districts to implement change. As noted in a joint report by the Maryland State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and Maryland State Department of Education: "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."

SUPPORT

The following organizations and individuals have issued school start time position statements, resolutions, legislation or editorials in support of safe, healthy and developmentally-appropriate school hours:

State and National Organizations:

- Start School Later, Inc. (a nationwide, volunteer-run nonprofit organization of parents, teachers, students and health professionals)
- Start School Later California
- California State Department of Education [ck?]
- California Teachers Association [ck?]
- American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry

- American Academy of Pediatrics
- American Medical Association
- American Psychological Association
- Education Commission of the States
- National Association of School Nurses/Society of Pediatric Nurses
- National Education Association
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Prominent Individuals and Experts from California:

- U.S. Rep. Zoe Lofgren, 19th District, California
- U.S. Rep. Ro Khanna, 17th District, California
- U.S. Rep. Mike Honda, former, 17th District, California
- Allison Chopel, director, California Adolescent Health Collaborative
- Ronald E. Dahl, M.D., professor of community health and human development, professor of joint medical program and school of public health, University of California, Berkeley
- William C. Dement, M.D., Ph.D., ("the world's leading authority on sleep, sleep disorders and the dangers of sleep deprivation"), professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences, director and founder of the Stanford University Sleep Disorders Clinic and Research Center
- Lisa Ehrlichman, RN, M.Ed., chair of adolescent health, California School Nurses Organization
- Allison Harvey, PhD., professor of clinical psychology, sleep and mood research clinic director, University of California, Berkeley
- Irena Keller, PhD., adjunct professor of child and adolescent development, San Jose State University
- Paul Kelley, MD, Sleep and Circadian Neuroscience Institute, University of Oxford (California native)
- Dennis Nolan, J.D., certified specialist, juvenile law and child welfare, Orange, California, founder schoolstarttime.org
- Kathy Ryan, MSN, PHN, FNP, president San Diego/Imperial Section, California School Nurses Organization
- Matthew P. Walker, director of sleep and neuroimaging laboratory, professor of psychology, University of California, Berkeley