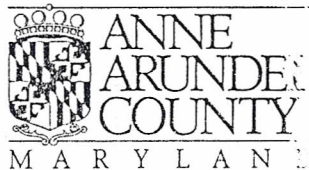


Janet S. Owens
County Executive



Frances B. Phillips
Health Officer

Mr. Robert Leahy
Chairman, Citizens Advisory Committee
Severna Park High School
755 S. Mesa Road
Millersville, MD 21108

September 9, 2004

Dear Mr. Leahy,


Thank you for your letter regarding high school starting times. We concur with your position that the literature and biological realities for adolescents supports starting high school later. From a health perspective we support later start times for older adolescents and believe this to be beneficial to students' health, well-being, mental health, behavior and academic success. In addition to improving test scores, high schools with later bell times become more pleasant for staff and students who can focus better together on the work of learning.

The health effects of changing start times are not as well documented as the academic and behavioral effects, but we believe this proposed change is based on sound science and might have health benefits related to reductions in risky behaviors during unsupervised afternoons (tobacco, alcohol and drug use, sexually transmitted disease, unplanned pregnancies, violence and other criminal involvement) and might also reduce accidents related to driving while sleep deprived. We would be interested in following the numbers and helping to document any effects should school hours change either for Severna park or better still for the county.

In 1998, as part of my role as a member of the Howard County Board of Health I worked on a committee that examined this issue and I enclose a copy of our report. You may also find it helpful to know that Med-Chi, the Maryland State Medical Society also passed a resolution on this issue, enclosed. Change is never easy and you may find these documents helpful in discussing the pros and cons of later school hours.

I wish you every success with this venture.

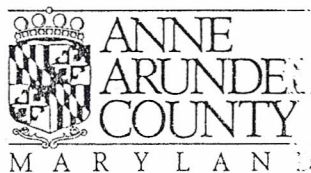
Sincerely,


Katherine Farrell MD MPH
Deputy Health Officer for Public Health

Cc: Will Myers, Principal, Severna Park High School
Frances B. Phillips, Health Officer
Jane Andrew

Anne Arundel County Department of Health
J. Howard Beard Health Services Building • 3 Harry S. Truman Parkway • Annapolis, Maryland 21401
Phone 410-222-7095 • Fax 410-222-7294 • www.aahealth.org

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