



Health, Safety and Equity in Education

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For Immediate Release

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GOVERNOR HOGAN SIGNS ORANGE RIBBON BILL FOR HEALTHY SCHOOL HOURS INTO LAW

Annapolis - The Orange Ribbon Bill for Healthy School Hours, the first legislation in the nation to recognize school systems for healthy and safe school hours was signed into law today in Maryland. The bipartisan legislation, sponsored as [HB39](#) by Delegate Aruna Miller (D-Montgomery County)—with a companion bill cross-filed by Senator Bryan Simonaire (R-Anne Arundel County)—becomes effective July 1st of this year.

Hundreds of thousands of Maryland students stand to benefit from this legislation, which establishes a voluntary, no-cost incentive program to encourage school districts to implement school hours that match teen sleep patterns and the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Centers for Disease Control, and the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene while respecting local control of specific school schedules.

“The bill incentivizes districts to use best change-management practices as they work to find feasible, affordable, and community-specific ways to ensure safe, healthy school hours ,” says Terra Ziporyn Snider, PhD, executive director and co-founder of Start School Later, an Annapolis-based nonprofit. “These practices include working with local stakeholders, educating the community, and addressing individual concerns.”

This bill is a new and creative way to address a well-recognized but intractable problem: extremely early bell times that are now widely recognized as undermining children's health, safety, and well-being. “I am pleased that Maryland continues to set the standard for academic excellence as demonstrated by the passage of the Orange Ribbon Bill,” notes Start School Later’s Maryland Legislative Director Danielle Brooks. “I am proud to have my children in Maryland public schools.”

With three levels of recognition, depending on the school system’s progress in achieving healthy and safe school hours, at least four school systems in Maryland are tentatively eligible for recognition under the Orange Ribbon Bill, should they choose to seek it: Anne Arundel, Garrett, Howard, and Montgomery Counties.

“Anne Arundel is eligible for the lowest level of recognition right now. We look forward to working with the Board of Education to progressively acquire additional recognition levels as the school system successfully implements healthier and safer school hours over the next few years,” said Start School Later Anne Arundel County Chapter Leader Lisa VanBuskirk.

Deb Jung, a chapter leader in Howard County praised the well-meaning efforts of the Howard County school district but expressed frustration that the issue has been “studied” for so long. “Parents want this change. Almost 80% of the parents surveyed last year stated they wanted to see school start times for high school students begin after 8:00am. It is time for the school district to take action. I hope the Orange Ribbon Bill will encourage this change.”

Baltimore County's Start School Later Chapter also praised the legislation. "Conversations about school start times are just getting started in Baltimore County. This legislation gives Baltimore County Public Schools a firm goal and recognition for moving its school start times to ones that are healthier for our students," said Start School Later Baltimore County Chapter Leader Andra Williams Broadwater.

"Montgomery County supporters of healthy hours for all students are pleased state legislators understood the need for state-level support for county school systems," said Ann Gallagher, a founding member of that chapter. "Montgomery County's multi-year, full-county effort to change start times, supported by over 80% of county parents, resulted in only a small step toward healthful start times. Montgomery County supporters hope the Orange Ribbon legislation will make it easier for other Maryland counties to establish appropriate start times for students' health."

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The bill text can be found at:

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?pid=billpage&stab=01&id=hb0039&tab=subject3&ys=2016RS>

Start School Later is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization working to ensure school start times compatible with health, safety, education, and equity. Please visit our website at startschoollater.net.