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**PRESS STATEMENT**

by Mandi Mader, Director of the Montgomery Chapter of Start School Later

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For Immediate Release

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**Montgomery County Public School System Recommends Later Bell Times**

***School Board should move quickly to approve the changes***

Rockville--Joshua Starr, Superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) [announced his support](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/press/index.aspx?page=showrelease&id=3407) today for pushing back start times for high school students by 50 minutes. This recommendation, along with [the report of the Bell Times Work Group](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/info/belltimesworkgroup/index.aspx) that he appointed to study the matter, will be presented to the MCPS Board of Education on October 8.

I applaud Dr. Starr for his bold stance and I urge the board to support him.

This announcement would not have been possible without the enormous outpouring of support from the community. In December 2012, advocates presented the board with a [petition](http://petitions.moveon.org/sign/changing-montgomery-county) of more than 10,000 signatures calling for later start times. An [analysis of the survey](http://thelloydsociety.org/work/current_projects/sleep_and_delinquency/) found that signers were overwhelmingly local, came from every part of the county, and represented everyone involved in this issue, including parents, teachers, students, sleep experts, and health care providers. Local activists continued to make their voices heard over the past year, and the petition is still collecting signatures to this day.

I was pleased to be able to represent Start School Later as a participant in the Bell Times Work Group. The group's manager John Matthews, former transportation director for MCPS, did an excellent job of coordinating its efforts and drafting the report.

Start School Later will continue to work with the county to educate the community about the benefits of delayed start times and identify solutions to the challenges that arise. The MCPS Board should move quickly to approve Dr. Starr's recommendations. Every day parents struggle to drag their sleep-deprived teens out of bed and off to early buses. The sooner these changes are made, the sooner everyone will benefit.

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*Mandi Mader is an adolescent and adult psychotherapist in Montgomery County and director of the Montgomery County chapter Start School Later, a coalition of health professionals, sleep scientists, educators, parents, students, and other concerned citizens dedicated to increasing public awareness about the relationship between sleep and school hours and to ensuring school start times compatible with health, safety, education, and equity. Please visit our website at:* [*http://www.startschoollater.net*](http://www.startschoollater.net)*.*