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| **COMMITTEE:    Education**  **TIME & DATE:  10:00 AM, Wednesday, April 04, 2018**  **PLACE:        E1.028  CHAIR: Senator Larry Taylor** |
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Expand High Quality Education Opportunities: Examine high-quality campus/programs in Texas and other states and make recommendations on incentives to expand high-performing campuses and programs. Review should include but not be limited to: program and course variety, unique public school models, transfer or open-enrollment policies within a district, collaboration between districts or public charters, online learning, and whether children with special educational needs, children of military families, and student populations in chronically high poverty areas should have additional options to meet their unique educational needs.

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My name is Alexandra Spencer; I live in Austin, Texas with a son in the public school system.

I’m here today representing Start School Later, a national non-profit organization of educators, parents and health professionals advocating for schools to return to traditional healthy school start times. It’s a fast growing organization with 112 chapters in 28 states including four here in Texas.

Texas doesn’t need to look beyond Texas to find a program/model worth expanding.

Almost all of the top-performing high schools in Texas have something in common. They start at 8:30 AM or later. Houston’s Carnegie Vanguard starts at 9, Austin’s Westlake High School starts at 8:50 and Dallas’ School for the Talented and Gifted starts at 9:15.

However, these are anomalies in the state. Only 12% of Texas school districts start high school after 8:30 AM - Aldine ISD outside of Houston starts at 6:55 AM with bus pick up starting at 5:15 AM.

Adolescent sleep deprivation is considered a national health crisis with 40% of American students getting six or less hours of sleep, according to the CDC. Children this age require about 9 hours of sleep.

Based on 25 years of peer-reviewed evidence, the Texas School Health Advisory Committee (TSHAC) recommends districts consider delaying the start of high school activities, including extracurricular activities, to at least 8:30 AM.

SHAC joined an ever-growing list of health and education groups recommending all middle and high schools start the day at 8:30 AM or later including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association and the National Parent Teacher Association.

School districts across the country (from Lawrence, KS to Texas City, TX) are starting school later because of the proven positive effects on academic performance and student health.

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When school start times align with student body clocks, students are awake and ready to learn; attention increases in class and cognitive functioning improves. Car crashes and suspensions decline. Attendance and discipline all improve — leading to higher graduation rates. Disadvantaged teens have been shown to benefit at twice the rate of their peers.

Better job prospects dramatically increase earnings over a person’s lifetime.

The RAND Corporation estimates that a nationwide move to 8:30 AM would contribute $83 billion to the U.S. economy within a decade, including $7.7 billion to the Texas economy.

Why don’t students go to bed earlier? It’s been proven that when teens hit puberty, their internal clock, which controls circadian rhythms, becomes delayed by approximately two hours.

Melatonin and other hormones are released later, causing a phase shift in sleep to later.

Last year, research on circadian rhythms and sleep won the Nobel Prize in Medicine – it’s an area of study positioned to explode.

The latest research finds that ADHD may be a problem associated with lack of regular circadian sleep and a chronic misalignment of biological processes.

Circadian rhythms are also being tied to learning disabilities, mental health, obesity and cancer.

Public schools are responsible for setting school schedules that meet the biological needs of its students. Legislative parameters are necessary to insure daily school start times recognize the biology of its learners.

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**Studies Referenced:**

<https://www.rand.org/news/press/2017/08/30.html>

<http://www.slate.com/articles/life/education/2016/04/can_the_best_high_school_in_the_country_thank_its_9_15_a_m_start_time_for.html>

<http://www.startschoollater.net/uploads/9/7/9/6/9796500/minnesota-1-11-conclusion.pdf>

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