



**Maryland | Statewide**

health, safety and equity in education

October 3, 2022

Dear Candidate for Board of Education:

For decades, Montgomery County's community members have sought later school hours for middle and high school students based on the ever-increasing evidence that early high school start times significantly contribute to chronic teen sleep deprivation, which in turn contributes to the two leading causes of death in teens – accidents and suicides. In addition to being life-threatening, this sleep deprivation negatively impacts adolescent physical and mental health, safety, and academic achievement, including increasing achievement gaps.

The need for healthy bell times for students is endorsed by nearly every medical group in the United States, the [U.S. Surgeon General](#), [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), and [Centers for Disease Control](#), and will help MCPS improve and excel in every area ranging from recovery from learning loss and achieving academically to reducing teenage violence in schools. All of these organizations, and the [National PTA](#), endorse healthy bell times for middle and high school students, such that no student begins school earlier than 8:30 a.m.

Parents care about this, as do the nearly 14 thousand people who signed a petition for later bell times on our [Start School Later](#) website. This issue was part of the MCCPTA's 2021 - 2022 [Advocacy Priorities](#). Additionally, a 2022 MCCPTA [letter to the Board of Education and County Council](#) specifically requested that a comprehensive study be funded to determine the feasibility of implementing later bell times that would incorporate leveraging local ride-on and Metro buses as well as yellow school buses to ensure that all available options are considered.

As a member of the Board of Education you will play a vital role in the implementation of healthy, safe, and age-appropriate school hours for all students. **Therefore, Start School Later Montgomery County respectfully requests your answers to the attached three question Candidate Questionnaire regarding your future plans to ensure healthy and safe school hours. You can feel free to add any comments or other information to your response.**

**Please return the Questionnaire by October 17th to**  
[startschoollatermontgomery@gmail.com](mailto:startschoollatermontgomery@gmail.com)

Your response will be shared on our website: <https://www.startschoolater.net/md-moco1.html> , on our Facebook page, and with our nearly 14,000 supporters who signed petitions in 2013 through 2022 to urge the Superintendent and Board of Education to act.

If you do not feel comfortable with answering the survey, Start School Later Montgomery County is available to meet with you via video call to review the academic, health, safety, and economic benefits of healthy, safe school hours for all children, the challenges of implementation, and lessons learned from jurisdictions across the nation who have successfully navigated this issue. I can be reached at [startschoolatermontgomery@gmail.com](mailto:startschoolatermontgomery@gmail.com).

Sincerely,

*Sandra S. Landis*

Montgomery County Chapter Leader

Start School Later

<https://www.startschoolater.net/md---montgomery-county.html>

Enclosure (1) 10 Community Benefits

Enclosure (2) 2022 BOE Candidate Questionnaire