



MARYLAND | MONTGOMERY COUNTY
health, safety and equity in education

March 11, 2024

Dear MCPS Board Candidate:

Montgomery County, Maryland middle and high school students deserve safe and healthy start times, which are directly related to student health. We can achieve these gains simply implementing a bell time change for secondary schools to begin at 8:30 a.m. or later, as recommended by nearly every medical group in the country, including the [U.S. Surgeon General](#), [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), and [Centers for Disease Control](#). Doing so will help MCPS improve and excel in every area ranging from learning loss recovery and academic achievement, to reducing teenage violence in schools.

In addition to these medical organizations, the [National PTA](#) also endorses healthy bell times for secondary school students. The [MCCPTA](#) included this initiative in its Annual Advocacy Priorities for each of the past three years, and in 2022 sent a [letter to the Board of Education and County Council](#) about this important initiative. Free State PTA included this initiative in its [2024 Advocacy Priorities](#). Further, the Maryland legislature recently held hearings on proposed [HB 1418](#) to codify safe and healthy bell times for teens into law for the entire state. The four Montgomery County Board of Education Members most recently elected indicated that they are in favor of this during the [2022 Bethesda Beat 2022 Candidate Forum](#).

States and school districts across the country have already changed their bell times, including our neighbors in Howard, Anne Arundel, and Fairfax counties. Despite a 2015 delay of secondary school start times toward the medically recommended goals, nearly a decade later, MCPS has still not completed this task. With Board of Education elections again on the horizon, we are understandably eager to know your position on this important issue.

We would like to give you the opportunity to respond to the attached Candidate Questionnaire regarding your future plans, if elected, to ensure healthy and safe school hours for teenagers in MCPS. You can feel free to add any comments or other information to your response. ***Please return the questionnaire by March 29th to StartSchoolLater@gmail.com***

Your response will be shared on our website: <https://www.startschoolater.net/md-mocol.html>, on our Facebook page, and with our nearly 14,000 supporters who signed petitions in 2013 through 2024 to urge the Superintendent and Board of Education to act.

Please feel free to contact me 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.

Sincerely,

Sandra S. Landis

Montgomery County Chapter Leader
Start School Later

<https://www.startschoolater.net/>

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

Enclosure (1) 10 Student and Community Benefits

Enclosure (2) 2024 BOE Candidate Questionnaire