



**Howard County | Maryland**

health, safety and equity in education

## BOE Election Candidate School Hours Questionnaire

Please return to: [sslhoco@gmail.com](mailto:sslhoco@gmail.com)

Candidate Name: Dr. Yun Lu District: 5

**1. Will you sign Start School Later's 2013 petition at <https://sign.moveon.org/petitions/changing-howard-county>? If you won't sign it, please explain why.**

Yes. I have signed the petition to start Howard County schools after 8am.

**2. Based on the research that later middle and high school start times increase graduation rates and decrease absenteeism, with disadvantaged students benefiting the most from age-appropriate school hours, do you feel the current school hours affects the County's ability to be a leader in K-12 education for all students?**

For HCPSS Class of 2018, the overall graduation rate was 92.0% while the graduation rate for Hispanic students and FARMs students was 76.9% and 78.3%, respectively; the overall dropout rate was 4.76% while the dropout rate for Hispanic students and FARMs students was 16.75% and 12.98%, respectively. A 2017 study including 30000 students from 29 public high schools showed significant improvement of attendance and graduation rates after delaying school start

time to 8:30am or later (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sleh.2017.01.002>). The current HCPSS school start times are early for high schools (7:25am) and many middle schools (7:40-8:25am). Based on the results from this comprehensive study, moving school start time to a later time could potentially improve HCPSS graduation and dropout rate, especially among disadvantaged students.

**3. What hours would you define as healthy, safe, and age appropriate? The current school hours are: Elementary 8:15-9:25 a.m. start times, Middle School 7:40-8:25 a.m. start times, and High School 7:25 a.m. start time.**

Elementary School: 8:15-9:25 a.m (The current start time is ok.)

Middle School: after 8:00am, hopefully close to 8:30am if bus schedule permits

High School: after 8:00am, hopefully close to 8:30am if bus schedule permits

**4. On December 19, 2017, Staff proposed four models for bell times that could be implemented. All four models had Elementary starting between at 8:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. and Middle between 8:00 a.m. and 8:45 a.m. Model 1: High school at 8 a.m. Model 2: High School at 8:15 a.m. Model 3: High School at 8:30 a.m. Model 4: High School at 8:45 a.m. What do you think about these four proposed models?**

The middle school and high school hours are moving to the right direction so our children can have more sleep. There are some implementation issues that we need to consider. For example, older siblings may need to take care of younger siblings after school while their parents are working, so high schools may need to start no later than the earliest elementary school start time.

**5. With the Board of Education purchasing a new bus routing system for the Department of Transportation, what would be your timeline of implementation healthy school hours?**

The purchase of the new bus routing system can help optimizing bus routes, managing drivers, and tracking buses and students. Scheduling buses efficiently could result in significant savings and provide HCPSS opportunities to implement healthy school hours. Planning is an important step before implementation. I would like HCPSS to start learning about this system soon, so HCPSS can have complete working knowledge of this new bus routing system and unlock the

full value of the system. Then HCPSS can work on optimizing the school start time and bus routes. Seeking community feedback is also important before rolling out new school hours and bus routes.

**6. Currently, HCPSS services 5 parochial schools with 21 bus routes dedicated to those schools at a price tag of \$800,000 annually to HCPSS. The HCPSS Transportation department uses their manpower to design and maintain those routes. The BOE's Legal Counsel stated that the school system is not legally required to supply bus service if a student does not reside on a public school bus route. What are your thoughts about HCPSS providing this extra service to these parochial schools?**

Howard County provides funding for the bus service to 5 parochial schools. If HCPSS stops providing this extra service to these parochial schools, most likely the county will not give the \$800,000 to HCPSS. Considering the potential negative impact of COVID-19 pandemic on county budget, the county could work with the parochial schools to see whether the parochial schools can provide partial funding.

**7. In your prior experience and positions, what have you done to ensure all Howard County Public School students (K-12) have healthy, safe, and age appropriate school hours?**

As a mother of two HCPSS students, I closely followed the HCPSS School Start and Dismissal Time Committee alternative models for school start time and provided feedback. I have been advocating through various platforms about teenager sleep deprivation and mental health issues.

**8. In your elected position, what will you do to ensure healthy and safe school hours for all of Howard County Public School Students? Please be specific: Resolutions, recommendations, funding requests, educational outreach, implementation efforts, etc.**

Student transportation service accounts for a very large portion of the HCPSS operating budget, I would closely examine the contracting procurement for student transportation service to ensure that the school system receives the best value from the contract. The new bus routing system will help HCPSS efficiently scheduling buses, optimizing bus routes, and reducing number of buses needed. It could result in significant monetary savings and provide HCPSS opportunities to implement healthy school hours. For schools on public transportation routes, public transportation could be utilized by high school students. This could potentially reduce

the number of buses needed. I will also advocate for the BOE to collaborate with the county council and seek community input.

**9. Is there anything else you would like your constituents and future voters to know about your position on safe, healthy, and age-appropriate school hours?**

Safe, healthy, and age-appropriate school hours are important for student's academic achievement, physical and emotional well-being. I support later school start time for middle and high school students.