



Howard County | Maryland

health, safety and equity in education

BOE Election Candidate School Hours Questionnaire

Please return to: sslhoco@gmail.com

Candidate Name: Jennifer Mallo District: 4

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.

I may have already signed it when I was running for the BOE in 2018 as I support the idea of later school start times, but I cannot sign it now as I believe it would be a conflict of interest to sign a petition to be submitted to a body I already sit on.

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?

The science supports that changing school start times to after 8am. The HCPSS would be a stronger leader in K-12 education if we adopted later school start times.

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.

The ideal times would be:

Elementary School: after 8 am and before 9:30 am

Middle School: 8 am or after and before 9:30 am

High School: 8 am or after and before 9:30 am

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 four models presented in 2017 were deemed not acceptable by the Board of Education. Assuming the remaining details could be worked out, it is my understanding that the 8:30 am model would be the best model based on the natural rhythms of a teenagers sleep cycle and revisions to that model are likely to be the most reasonable.

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 optimal implementation of healthier school hours would be when High School #13 comes online. That would give the Department of Transportation sufficient time to run the routing software in parallel with the old system to deal with problems or issues that may arise from implementing new software. This would give the administration sufficient time to develop acceptable models and have them adopted by the BOE. It would also be a cost savings to combine the development of new routes for the new school/modification of old routes at the same time as adjusting the start times of all schools through economies of scale.

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?

I believe that the school system should provide the transportation that is legally required. I voted to eliminate this bus service. If we had not reconsidered this vote at the request of Dr. Wu, we would have been unable to pass and present a budget for the HCPSS to the County Executive. It is a dereliction of duty to not pass a budget for the school system.

This parochial school bus service is a pass through in the operating budget from the County to bus service for the 5 parochial schools. The Board cannot divert the money from Category 14 parochial bus service and use it for any other expenditure. Simply put, if we do not ask for the money, the school system's budget will likely be reduced by \$800,000. There is not an ability to ask for the money and then use it elsewhere.

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?

On February 5, 2020, after Ms. Cutroneo brought up in the BOE meeting about revisiting efforts to start school later, I put forward that start school later initiative could be directly linked to the opening of HS13. Three Board members at that meeting, myself included, made clear the importance of this issue to the Superintendent and our commitment to moving this initiative forward.

While I was the Chair and Vice Chair of the Community Advisory Council, I took a lead role in making sure our community received regular presentations from the School Start and Dismissal Times Workgroup. Through this we offered eight pages of feedback to the BOE that represented the views of the community in 2017 to help with the Board's deliberations. We also offered feedback from presentations by the administration and subsequent discussions in December 2016 and September 2015 on this topic.

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.

I will continue in my elected position to try to get the support of my colleagues to ensure that schools start later. As no single member of the BOE can make decisions, it takes building consensus to achieve the four votes necessary to approve any decision to start schools later. We will need to direct the Superintendent to develop models, to develop feasibly busing models, and inform the community of the changes that will need to occur for schools to start later.

This will really be an issue of organization and timing. In order for it to happen for the Fall of 2023, the BOE will need to take a final vote in the Fall of 2022. In order to take a vote in the Fall of 2022, there will need to be sufficient time allotted for:

1. Let the community know that later school start times is a possibility and why it is important,
2. Receiving public input, and
3. Later start time models to be developed and for an accurate financial forecast to be developed.

Each of these components make it imperative that the process begins early in 2021 with the new Board. It is critical that members of the BOE know how our processes and budgets work at the beginning of their terms. This is one of the many reasons that BOE is not an entry level position and experience of the candidates within the school system should have value.

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?

Modifying school start/stop times is a complex challenge – with numerous stakeholders and competing interests. While the science is very clear as to the benefits for high school students, there will most likely be increased costs as we shrink the ‘delivery window’ in the morning and afternoon. Based on the last efforts by the Board of Education to address this topic, I expect that there will not be a single obvious solution on which everyone will agree.

In many ways, changing the school start/stop times mirrors some of the challenges the Board recently faced with re-districting. To that end, I am willing to make the following bet – there will be those in the community who will oppose whatever proposal to change school start/stop times comes forward for one reason or another. A proposal to change established school start/stop times will represent change – and it will be scary to some members of the

community. The easiest thing in the world will be to latch on to the least popular aspects of the proposed plan and play to the critics – expressing that while I support later school start times in general, I must regrettably vote ‘No’ to any plan proposed. The hard thing – the really hard thing – will be to work tirelessly with other Board members and community stakeholders to refine the plan in to one that can get majority support from the Board and be implemented.

With my experience, knowledge, and grit, I will work tirelessly to build consensus and to move later school start times into reality.