

MEDCHI, THE MARYLAND STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY  
HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution 54-98

INTRODUCED BY: Public Health Council

SUBJECT: Reforming School Schedules

REFERRED TO: Reference Committee C

Whereas, School schedules are set by Boards of Education; they take into consideration economic, state requirements, political and logistical considerations such as transportation, sports, safety, union contracts, parental expectations and traditions, but do not currently account for biological factors or the implications for effectively supporting good parenting in today's working families; and

Whereas, The timing of adolescent biological sleep/wake cycles differ from early childhood, prepubescent and adult sleep/wake cycle timing; and

Whereas, Adolescents have a biologic tendency to seek later bedtimes and rise times; as a consequence of this shifted sleep/wake cycle, do not have optimal cognitive functioning in the early morning hours; and

Whereas, Starting school later for high-schoolers would lead to more efficient learning; and

Whereas, Starting and ending school later would have additional benefits by reducing unstructured unsupervised time in homes where parents are not home in the afternoon and the associated adolescent risky behaviors; and

Whereas, It is now the norm for the majority of parents of adolescents to be absent from the home and working during the afternoons; and

Whereas, Lack of structure in the afternoons contributes to increasing risk of criminal activity as demonstrated by the fact that the peak hour for juvenile arrests is 4 PM; and

Whereas, Adolescent experimentation with drugs, tobacco, alcohol and sex, violent or gang behavior or illegal acts occurs primarily during unsupervised time; and

Whereas, School bell times may have direct bearing on parents' ability to effectively control and monitor the behavior of their children and protect them from harm; and

Whereas, Society has an interest in providing the environment in which children can grow to be healthy adults; therefore be it

Resolved, That MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, work to promote changes in high school schedules to allow later start and end times for the school day; and be it further

Resolved, That MedChi inform its members and, if possible, the general public of its endorsement of this resolution.

*Adopted by MedChi House of Delegates on September 12, 1998*