



**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: Sezin Palmer 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 believe I already signed this petition a couple of years ago.

**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?**

I do believe that current school hours are detrimental to the health and well-being of middle and high school children in particular. I think with school hours better aligned with the biological needs of children during different stages of development, we could be better positioned to be a leader in K-12 education for all 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.**

Ideally, I think a narrower window of start times (if feasible) would be preferred to allow a schedule such as:

Elementary School: 7:45-8:15

Middle School: 8:15-8:45

High School: 8:45

Of course, considering the impact on bus schedules and associated costs will be required to define feasible windows.

**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?**

If we are going to make these changes, we should make the changes in a way that better align with children's biological needs. I think it makes sense to invert the current model and have elementary school children going to school earliest, followed by middle and high school students. The American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended (<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/134/3/642>) that middle and high school students start school at or after 8:30 AM. Of the models presented, I would support model 4; however, I would be more inclined to support a model that had elementary schools starting earlier.

**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?**

I think that anything that is a priority can be implemented within a year of being decided. I would support making this change as soon as practical.

**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?**

My understanding is that this money is provided to HCPSS for the specific purpose of providing this service. Since the funds cannot be applied to other educational needs across HCPSS, I would support continuing to provide this service if the funding continues to be allocated to HCPSS for the purpose of doing so.

**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?**

I have not been in other positions that would allow me to influence school hours for HCPSS students. However, I have been a strong believer in later school start times and have signed petitions to make this change in addition to being a vocal advocate for this change among PTAs on which I have served.

**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 would recommend that the BOE address the issue of school start times and consider shifting start times for middle and high schools to begin after elementary schools. I would recommend we solicit community input and testimony from experts and advocates before making decisions; however, given the science behind later school start times for adolescents, this is clearly an important issue. I would like to be sure the stated funding challenges are accurate before using that as a reason not to move this forward or to delay it. Given the positive impact it would have on the health and well-being of students, perhaps there are innovative ways this could be implemented that would have minimal budgetary impact.

**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?**

I believe my above responses fully reflect my views on the importance of safe, healthy and age-appropriate school hours. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important discussion!