



Howard County | Maryland

health, safety and equity in education

BOE Election Candidate School Hours Questionnaire

Please return to: sslhoco@gmail.com

Candidate Name: Larry Pretlow II

District: 2

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 am a strong supporter of starting school later. Middle and High schoolers crucially need more sleep to learn more effectively.

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?

Absolutely, the research is clear that teenagers are sleep deprived. Sleep deprivation and an increasingly stressful high school experience increase absenteeism which results in a less enriching learning experience for all students. As a result, we need to work to change that by implementing 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.

Elementary School: 9:30

Middle School: 9:00

High School: 8:30

I would define healthy safe and age-appropriate school start times as between 8:30 and 9:30. There needs to be a 30-minute gap between the school levels so busses can be reused so we can save money in these tough financial times. As a result, I believe 8:30 for high school students, 9:00 for Middle School students , and 9:30 for elementary school students is ideal.

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?

I believe these 4 proposed models are much healthier than the current proposals. I would ideally like for High schools to start around 8:30 but even going from 7:30 to 8:00 is a huge difference in terms of allowing teenagers to get the crucial sleep that they need to learn effectively.

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?

Healthy school hours are a challenge to implement in the tough financial situation caused by COVID-19. However, it can be done. I would like to work with the county council to cut other areas in the county budget and stop some capital pork projects such as the new courthouse and cultural center so we can take some of the down payment savings into investing in later school times. The BOE does not have taxation authority and increased taxes will not happen in light of COVID-19 for families and businesses to recover financially. As a result, the only way this can be done is by cutting spending in other areas. The best-case scenario may happen by 2022 or so. Worst case I would like for this to be done by 2024. This all depends on whether or not the county council is willing to fund the request which depends on revenue which is caused by economic conditions as well as if the County Council spends the revenue responsibly which they are currently not doing.

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 would like to be able to say we can cut this immediately but I don't think this is feasible right away. The implication of possibly cutting this is that many of the students taking these busses may return to the school system costing us more in terms of educating these students than bussing them. However, if we have a task force to investigate this and we find that the cost to HCPSS to educate students who return to the school system is less than I believe it would be worth doing. My decision on whether or not to continue this program is guided by the financial savings we may or may not gain from this.

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 an Oakland Mills Village Board member and community advocate, I have had the opportunity to hear from residents of my community on their strong support for healthy school hours. Unfortunately, the BOE decided to redistrict walkers and turn them into bus riders for the residents of the Verona where I live which decreased their sleep as they now have to wake up earlier to catch the bus. I helped engage the community and some BOE members to explain the implications.

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.

In my elected position I will work to ensure healthy and safe school hours by first requesting that the BOE start a task force to explore the feasibility of this when we look at bus routes. This task force will consist of school and county administration officials as well as teachers, students, parents, and BOE members. They will be responsible for looking over the budget and conducting outreach with parents on how to achieve this crucial goal. I will work to try to get them to begin implementing this by between 2022 and 2024 depending on fiscal constraints. Also, the recent redistricting has resulted in some very far school moves which were completely unnecessary and not needed for capacity. For instance, in my district in a few schools, they moved students living a mile away from their school and may have been walkers and moved them 4 miles away. This could mean a 30-minute increase in bus transportation. I will work with the community on how to reverse some of these moves which may be feasible.

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?

Healthy school hours are a challenge to achieve in the tough financial situation caused by COVID-19. However, it can be done. If this issue raises your strong interest then please email

your county council representative to ask them to cut other areas in the county budget and stop some capital pork projects such as the new courthouse and cultural center so we can take some of the downpayment savings into investing in later school times. The BOE does not have taxation authority and increased taxes will not happen in light of COVID-19 for families and businesses to recover financially. As a result, the only way this can be done is by cutting spending in other areas. Your advocacy is needed for that to happen.