



MARYLAND | MONTGOMERY COUNTY
health, safety and equity in education

BOE Primary 2024 Election Candidate School Hours Questionnaire

Please return to: startschoollatermontgomery@gmail.com

Candidate Name: Rebecca Smondrowski

1. 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 agree that MCPS secondary schools should start at 8:30 am or later?

While I appreciate the intent behind the proposal to shift MCPS secondary school start times to 8:30 am or later, it's important to consider the broader implications of such a change. As a 12 year veteran on the board, I supported the bell time study and implementation to start schools later. We must balance the scientific research with impacts on family schedules, transportation logistics, and after-school activities. Ensuring that our educational policies support not only academic success but also the holistic well-being of our students and their families requires a specific approach that I know I can help achieve as a continued board member.

2. Are you willing to commit to enacting a Board of Education Resolution within your first 100 days in office to officially establish a goal to start secondary schools in Montgomery County at 8:30 a.m. or later?

Given the complexities surrounding school start times, including logistical, financial, and community impact considerations, I believe it's essential to proceed with a comprehensive approach. While I fully recognize the benefits of later start times for secondary schools, I will advocate for a thorough evaluation process. This includes engaging with educators, parents, students, and transportation experts to understand the full implications. My priority is to ensure that any policy changes, including school start times, are made with a deep understanding of their effects on all stakeholders.

3. Before implementing later secondary school bell times, both Anne Arundel and Howard Counties each conducted a transportation study to inform this decision; Fairfax County is now in the process of doing the same to further adjust their bell times. Are you willing to commit to work toward funding a comprehensive transportation study during your first 100 days in office to look at all transportation resources the county has available, in addition to MCPS school buses, to achieve healthy bell times?

I believe engaging with transportation experts is a key part of evaluating any adjustments to later start times and have requested MCPS include this in our study. Our transportation depots are responsible for transporting thousands of kids per day and driving thousands of miles. We must rely on experts to determine how adjusting to later school times would impact the operations of our transportation fleets.

4. Will you sign our [new petition](#) regarding bell times for teens, designed to replace petition from 2012 that has nearly 14,000 signatures on it? If not, please explain why.ⁱ

As a current board of education member it would be inappropriate for me to sign a petition as this position plays a key role in making decisions that impact mcps.

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

I want to emphasize that my commitment to the health, safety, and well-being of our students is unwavering. The question of adjusting school start times is not just about schedules; it's about ensuring our children have the best possible conditions for learning and growth. While I advocate for careful consideration and comprehensive analysis before making such recommendations, please understand that this stance stems from a desire to make informed decisions that benefit our entire community. I am committed to exploring all avenues to support safe, healthy, and age-appropriate learning environments. This

includes not only considering adjusted start times but also looking into other supportive measures such as mental health resources, nutrition, and physical activity. I believe that by working together, we can create an educational system that truly meets the needs of every student.

ⁱ *Please note that the iPetition survey hosting company may solicit a donation. No payment is required for your signature to be*

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