



Anne Arundel County Chapter | Maryland
health, safety and equity in education

March 1, 2018

Dear Candidate for **County Council/Board of Education/County Executive**

For over two decades, Anne Arundel County's community members have sought later school hours for high school students based on the ever increasing evidence that early high school start times result in chronic teen sleep deprivation. This sleep deprivation negatively impact adolescent physical and mental health, safety, and academic achievement, including the achievement gap. The National Association of PTAs, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association, American Academy of Sleep Medicine, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other public health groups recommend that middle and high school start no earlier than 8:30 a.m.. As noted in Enclosure 1, **the entire community can benefit from school hours that are healthy, safe, and age appropriate** for all students.

This school year (2017-2018), Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) implemented its first system-wide change in school hours in several decades by delaying high school 13 minutes from 7:17 a.m. to 7:30 a.m, still a full hour earlier than recommended. Nearly all other schools were delayed 15 minutes. Middle schools now start between 8:10-9:25 a.m. Elementary schools now start between 8:10-9:40 a.m. The delay is insufficient for high school, and in many cases, it endangers the safety of elementary and middle school students by forcing them to walk home from their bus stops in the dark.

Only 21.4% of Anne Arundel high school student get 8 hours of sleep on weeknight, down from 59.3% of middle school students (2014 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey). An adolescent's still-growing body requires up to 10 hours of sleep and they typically can't fall asleep earlier than 11 p.m. With the earliest magnet high school bus picking up at 5:38 a.m. and the earliest regular high school bus picking up at 6:13 a.m., it is little wonder that our high school students are chronically sleep deprived.

The challenge then is not a discussion of *whether* AACPS should take the next step towards healthy, safe, and age appropriate school hours for all of its students. It's a discussion of *how and when* to take the next step to correct the school hours for all students so that they are safe, healthy, and age-appropriate..

As a **member of the County Council/Board of Education/the County Executive**, you will play a vital role in that discussion of *how and when* to establish healthy, safe school hours for all students. Therefore, **Start School Later Anne Arundel County respectfully requests your answers to the questions in Enclosure 2 regarding your future efforts to ensure healthy and safe school hours. Please return the survey by April 2nd.**

Your response will be shared on our website, Facebook page, and with the 4,000+ supporters who signed petitions in 2012 and 2017 to urge the Board of Education to act. Our 2017 petition can be found at <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/establish-safe-and-healthy-school-hours-in-anne-arundel-county>

Start School Later Anne Arundel County would be welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the academic, health and safety, and economic benefits of healthy, safe school hours for all children, the challenges of implementation, and lessons learned from jurisdictions across the nation, and we will reach out to you to do so. In the interim, if you would like to talk about this matter, I can be reached at sslaaco@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa E VanBuskirk".

Lisa VanBuskirk, P.E., Chapter Leader, Start School Later Maryland | Start School Later Anne Arundel County

Enclosure (1) 10 Community Benefits

Enclosure (2) 2018 Election Candidate Questionnaire

10 Ways Later MIDDLE and HIGH SCHOOL Start Times Benefit Teens and the Community

1. Healthy School Hours Reduce the Achievement Gap "[D]elaying school start times by one hour, from roughly 7:30 to 8:30, increases standardized test scores by at least 2 percentile points in math and 1 percentile point in reading. The effect is largest for students with below-average test scores, suggesting that later start times would narrow gaps in student achievement."

2. Healthy School Hours Lower Juvenile Crime Rates Juvenile Crime peaks nationwide at 3 p.m., a time that's between the end of school and when parents get home. Police support limiting unsupervised situations at this crucial time. Also, sleep deprived teens are more likely to commit crime due to low self-control.

3. Healthy School Hours Help Prevent Car Crashes Drowsy driving is responsible for a significant number of fatal teen crashes. School districts with later morning start times see the teen crash rates decline.

4. Healthy School Hours Reduce Drop-Out Rates School attendance improves, tardiness decreases and graduation rates increase, which helps raise tax revenues and reduce crime and gang activity. When comparing attendance and graduation rates before and after the schools implemented a delayed starting time, the average graduation rate jumped from 79% to 88%, and the average attendance rate went from 90% to 94%.

5. Healthy School Hours Improve Health

Sleep loss has wide-ranging consequences, including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and hypertension. Sleep deprivation reduces the immune system. With later, healthier school start times, teens experience fewer sports injuries and miss fewer days of school due to illness.

6. Healthy School Hours Are Better for Mental Health Inadequate sleep is linked to depressed mood, anxiety, behavioral problems, alcohol and drug use, risky behaviors and suicidal thoughts.

The Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2013 (YRBS) shows that 16.9% of Anne Arundel County high school students seriously considered suicide and

13% made a plan to do so. The county's numbers are slightly higher than the Maryland average. When able to sleep more:

- Teen attitudes and behavior improve
- Teens report less depression
- Teenage needs for medication decreases

(A cost-benefit analysis prepared for Fairfax County, Virginia, estimates that later start times could save the community \$1.7 million a year in mental health treatment costs.)

7. Healthy School Hours Help Prevent Substance Abuse Increased and adequate sleep decreases risk taking behaviors such alcohol and drug use. The Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2013 shows that Anne Arundel County high school students have higher rates of substance abuse than the Maryland average across nearly all categories queried.

8. Healthy School Hours Make Streets Safer

With early school start times, many students who are eligible for school bus service opt out and instead drive to school (or are driven by family members), which leads to more cars on the road during morning rush hours. In addition, children walking to schools and bus stops in the predawn darkness are a serious safety risk for both pedestrians and drivers.

9. Healthy School Hours Are Family-Friendly

A year after the city of Minneapolis implemented later start times, students were getting an hour more of sleep per school night, 92 percent of parents were happy with the change, and parents reported improved relationships with their children.

10. Healthy School Hours Benefit the Economy

The potential costs of schools starting after 8:30 a.m. can be recouped in as little as 2-3 years, based on improved academic outcomes (thus increased lifetime earnings) and a reduction in teen drowsy driving accidents.

SOURCES: (1) <http://educationnext.org/do-schools-begin-too-early/> and http://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/legacy/files/downloads_and_links/092011_organize_jacob_rockoff_brief.pdf
(2) www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24085558
(3) www.geico.com/information/autosafety/safety--library/ and <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2603528/pdf/jcsm.4.6.533.pdf>
(4) http://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/legacy/files/downloads_and_links/092011_organize_jacob_rockoff_brief.pdf and [http://www.sleephealthjournal.org/article/S2352-7218\(17\)30002-5/fulltext](http://www.sleephealthjournal.org/article/S2352-7218(17)30002-5/fulltext) McKeever, PM and Clark, L. Delayed high school start times than 8:30 and impact on graduation rates and attendance. *Sleep Health: Journal of the National Sleep Foundation*, 2017;3(2), 119-125.
(5) http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6430a1.htm?s_cid=mm6430a1_e and <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25028798>
(6) <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2656315/> Bernert RA, Joiner TE. Sleep disturbances and suicide risk: A review of the literature. *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment*. 2007;3(6):735--743 and <https://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/app/Results.aspx?LID=MD>
(7) <https://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/app/Results.aspx?LID=MD>
(8) <http://startschoolater.pbworks.com/w/page/60412558/Sleep%20Loss%20and%20Accidents%20or%20injury>
(9) <http://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/162769/Impact%20of%20Later%20Start%20Time%20Final%20Report.pdf?sequence=1.pdf>
(10) https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2109.html *Maryland specific data unavailable.





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Election Candidate School Hours Questionnaire

Please return to: sslaaco@gmail.com

Candidate Name: _____

The American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association, American Academy of Sleep Medicine, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other public health groups recommend that middle and high school start no earlier than 8:30 a.m. These experts base their recommendation on numerous studies that connect changing adolescent sleep patterns and early school start times to lower academic achievement, negative physical and mental health conditions, and risky behaviors among teens.

A 2014 Start Time Task Force by Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) recommended several potential options to improve school hours, and in February 2015, the County Council unanimously passed Resolution 6-15 urging AACPS to follow the recommendations of its 2014 Task Force and “expeditiously take measures to establish safe and healthy high school hours for all students.”

Despite shifting start times by 13-15 minutes this year, AACPS and the Board of Education have thus far been unable to fully implement safe, healthy, and age-appropriate school hours. Therefore, Start School Later Anne Arundel County asks:

1. Will you sign Start School Later’s 2017 petition at <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/establish-safe-and-healthy-school-hours-in-anne-arundel-county> ?

If No, will you sign it? If you won’t sign it, please explain why.

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?

3. What hours would you define as healthy, safe, and age appropriate for:

Elementary School:

Middle School:

High School:

4. In your prior experience and positions, what have you done to ensure all Anne Arundel County Public School students (K-12) have healthy, safe, and age appropriate school hours?

5. In your elected position, what will you do to ensure healthy and safe school hours for all of Anne Arundel County Public School Students? Please be specific: Resolutions, recommendations, funding requests, educational outreach, implementation efforts, etc.

6. What is your timeframe for your actions in Question 5 Please be specific, Fiscal Year, School Year, etc.

7. 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?