



MARYLAND | MONTGOMERY COUNTY
health, safety and equity in education

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Montgomery County School Board Primary Election Winners Support Later Secondary School Start Times

Candidates Prioritize Teen Health by Endorsing Healthy School Schedules

(Montgomery County, MD) The Montgomery County Board of Elections certified the 2024 primary election returns on Saturday, May 25, 2024. The Start School Later Montgomery County Chapter congratulates the winners running for seats on the Board of Education for Montgomery County Public School Schools: Lynne Harris and Rita Montoya (At Large), Natalie Zimmerman and Brenda Diaz (District 2), Laura Stewart and Shebra Evans (District 4).

“We’re excited that all six of the candidates advancing to the general election in November have [expressed support](#) for later school start times for MCPS middle school and high school students,” said Sandra Landis, Chapter Leader of Start School Later Montgomery County. In fact, five out of the six winning candidates even signed our [updated petition](#), which already has nearly 1,000 supporters.”

The science is clear: during adolescence, teens require about nine hours of sleep per night, yet beginning around puberty their natural sleep onset moves 2-3 hours later, making it difficult for most to fall asleep until 11:00 p.m. or later. [Studies find](#) again and again that teens in fact *do* get more sleep when school starts later, contributing to better physical and mental health, less substance abuse, safer driving, and improved attendance, academic performance, and graduation rates.

“MCPS teens deserve safe and healthy start times that allow for adequate sleep, which are directly related to student physical and mental health,” said Landis.

Nearly every major medical organization in the country, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association, American Academy of Sleep Medicine, and the CDC [recommend](#) school start times of 8:30 a.m. or later for adolescents.

[California and Florida](#) policymakers found the evidence so compelling that they passed statewide laws to start public schools later. Maryland's [Anne Arundel County Public Schools](#), the district implemented healthy school hours in 2022.

“States and local school districts nationwide are already prioritizing student well-being by working out the logistics to start school later. It’s time for MCPS to do the same,” said Landis.

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