



**Testimony of Maine Public Health Association in Support of:
LD 396: An Act to Provide for a Later Starting Time for High Schools**

Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Room 208, Cross State Office Building
Thursday, February 27, 2025

Good morning, Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Rebecca Boulos. I am a resident of South Portland and executive director of Maine Public Health Association.

MPHA is the state's oldest, largest, and most diverse association for public health students and professionals, representing 850 individual and 70 organizational members across Maine. Our mission is to advance the health of all people and places in Maine.

This bill would require secondary schools in Maine to start no earlier than 8:30am, beginning with the 2026-2027 school year. MPHA is in support of this bill.

[According to a consensus statement](#) from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, youth ages 13 to 18 years old should regularly sleep 8 to 10 hours each night for good health. During puberty, youth's biological rhythms change such that they stay up later at night and sleep later in the morning.¹ Following this natural sleep rhythm is challenging for youth as school starts earlier than when they may naturally awaken, reducing the amount of quality sleep they receive each night. Insufficient sleep can increase the risk of developing obesity and depression, cause lower levels of physical activity, and worsen academic performance and behavior.^{2,3}

We recognize there are challenges with a later start time, including bussing, sports practices and other extra-curricular activities, and considerations for teachers and school staff, such as caregiving responsibilities. We also recognize there are wide-reaching benefits for youth, including better physical and mental health and improved academic performance and behavior. As such, we are supportive of this legislation. Thank you for considering our testimony.

¹ Crowley SJ, Acebo C, Carskadon MA. Sleep, circadian rhythms, and delayed phase in adolescence. *Sleep Med.* 2007;8:602–12.

² Winsler A, Deutsch A, Vorona RD, Payne PA & Szklo-Coxe M. 2015. Sleepless in Fairfax: The difference one more hour of sleep can make for teen hopelessness, suicidal ideation, and substance use. *J. Youth Adolescence*, 44(2): 362–378.

³ Chaput JP et al. Systematic review of the relationships between sleep duration and health indicators in school-aged children and youth. *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism.* 2016;41:6(Suppl 3).