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LD 396, An Act to Provide for a Later Starting Time for High Schools **- Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs**

Dear Esteemed Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs members,

I am writing to urge you to support LD396, as a Pediatrician, a school physician and a mom to adolescent twins. I love caring for adolescents in my practice and at home. One of the best parts of both jobs is encouraging young people to adapt healthy habits that will last a lifetime. Sleep is a fundamentally important part of a healthy life for adolescents and adults. Our healthy life habits are much easier to carry out if they are engrained in our schedules from an early age.

Adolescents and teens do not only need to shut off their screens and fall asleep at a reasonable time. There is abundant scientific evidence that teens and adolescents do not just require healthy sleep habits, but there is actually a phase change to the sleep-wake hours in adolescence. The surge of melatonin, a brain chemical that makes us tired, is shifted later in the adolescent brain than in younger children and than in mature adults. Adolescents are tired from this melatonin surge between 10-11pm. Science also tells us that this age group needs 8.5-9.5 hours of sleep at night for optimum function. In simple math, if the adolescent brain is tired at 11 and needs 8.5 hours of sleep then they need to sleep until 730am. In order to get to school on time including a bus ride, the school day needs to shift to start after 830am.

Chronic sleep loss in adolescence can lead to, increased sports injuries, increased motor vehicle accidents, cognitive dysfunction, increased tardiness, poor academic performance, increased anxiety and has been related to numerous other poor health outcomes cited by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Optimum sleep (between 8.5-9.5 hours) has proven to decrease the number of days students are tardy and improved overall mood in their morning classes.

The American Academy of Pediatrics, the Center for Disease Control and the American Medical Association all support starting school at the right time for adolescents. They cite clear scientific evidence that delaying school start times has clear health benefits for adolescents.

The school district that I live and work in went through the Start School Later process several years ago. They worked hard to educate the community on the benefits that this would offer adolescents. They were clear about the difficulty that change can bring for families. I am so very proud that the schools and the community came together to start the middle and high school days at 830am. There has been excellent feedback from teachers too specifically highlighting the engagement of students in the early classes in the day. As my children have become adolescents, they too are benefiting. I've gotten to observe the shift in their circadian rhythms from pre-adolescent early risers to adolescents who like to sleep a little later in the morning.

Adolescence in general is not easy. Let's show them that we support their overall health and well-being by letting their brains have much needed sleep. In turn, they will show us how they can truly shine.

Thank you for your attention and thoughtful contemplation of scientific evidence that supports this bill.

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Sincerely,
Maggie Bordeaux, DO, MPH
Pediatrician, School Physician and mother

Reference: [School Start Times for Adolescents | Pediatrics | American Academy of Pediatrics](#)