

Testimony Before the Joint Standing Committee on  
Education and Cultural Affairs

In Support of LD 396

*An Act to Provide for a Later Starting Time for High Schools*

February 27, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Committee, I am Ryan Gordon, a resident of Hallowell, writing in support of LD 396, An Act to Provide for a Later Starting Time for High Schools.

I am the parent of a 6<sup>th</sup> grade student in RSU 2, which includes schools in Monmouth, Hallowell, Farmingdale, and Dresden. I have been working with the administration of our RSU for the last couple of years to move our start time to 8:30 am or later for middle and high school.

I will not speak in detail about the many benefits to our children that later start times would bring—the scientific evidence is strong, clear, and obvious that it would be a great benefit for mental, academic, and physical health—and other testimony today will highlight that evidence. Instead I want to make two points: (1) that later start times are one of the most efficient and easiest ways to quickly improve children’s health; and (2), school districts need statewide government action on this issue in order to make positive adjustments to start times.

(1) There are many things that could be done by this Committee and school districts to make improvements to childhood mental health, academic achievement, and physical well-being, but none are as relatively simple, cheap, and effective as simply moving start times later in the morning. The benefits would be felt immediately, and evidence shows that they would be powerful. The logistical burdens and costs of adjusting start times are not zero, but they are low compared with many other potential changes (e.g., increased hiring of teachers and psychologists, better quality food, increased instruction time, etc.), and would be made even easier by universal statewide adoption.

(2) My experience working with RSU 2 shows that we need statewide government action to make this change. The administration of RSU 2 has been receptive and interested in parent advocacy on this issue, and has been trying in good faith to implement later start times, but it is made difficult by the fact that our RSU spans four far-flung towns and serves students who live and participate in many different communities and activities. The hardest challenge has been working with transportation services that also have to serve other neighboring schools and institutions. Moving our start times later would be difficult unless other schools and institutions do the same at the same time. Another challenge is that students take part in afterschool activities with many different clubs, teams, or lessons with students from other regional schools, and it

would be hard for them to attend some activities unless all the schools had later schedules. For these reasons, our RSU cannot make the desired changes to our school schedule alone—this requires collective action, which necessitates a State law like LD 396.

Please vote ought to pass on LD 396. Thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony, and thank you for your work for Maine's children.