



Mar 4, 2025

Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Maine State Legislature
Augusta, ME

Testimony in Support of LD 396, An Act to Provide for a Later Starting Time for High Schools

Dear Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Maine Association of School Nurses (MASN), I am writing to express our strong support for LD 396, An Act to Provide for a Later Starting Time for High Schools. Our collective professional experience and observations have consistently demonstrated the detrimental effects of early school start times on the health and well-being of our adolescent students.

The current early start times in many Maine high schools directly conflict with the biological sleep patterns of adolescents. Evidence based research, including studies from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, clearly indicates that teenagers experience a shift in their circadian rhythms, leading to a natural tendency to fall asleep later and wake up later. This biological change makes it incredibly difficult for them to achieve the recommended 8-10 hours of sleep when school begins before 8:30 AM.

The consequences of chronic sleep deprivation may be significant and far-reaching. We frequently see students presenting with:

- **Increased fatigue and daytime sleepiness:** This directly impacts their ability to focus, learn, and participate in class. (Owens, J. A., Adolescent sleep working group, & Committee on Adolescence. (2014). Insufficient sleep in adolescents and young adults: an update on causes and consequences. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 54(4), 429-431.)
- **Elevated rates of anxiety and depression:** Sleep deprivation exacerbates mental health issues and can contribute to increased irritability and mood swings. (Liu, X., Liu, L., Owens, J. A., & Kaplan, D. L. (2005). Sleep patterns and sleep problems among schoolchildren in the United States: a nationally representative sample. *Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine*, 1(2), 131-141.)
- **Weakened immune systems:** Sleep is essential for immune function, and insufficient sleep makes students more susceptible to illness. (Besedovsky, L., Lange, T., & Born, J. (2012). Sleep and immune function. *Pflügers Archiv-European Journal of Physiology*, 463(1), 121-137.)
- **Increased risk of injuries:** Drowsiness can impair reaction time and coordination, leading to accidents, particularly among student drivers. (Danner, F., & Phillips, B. (2008). Adolescent sleep, school start times, and teen motor vehicle crashes. *Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine*, 4(6), 533-535.)
- **Decreased academic performance:** Cognitive function, memory, and concentration are all compromised by lack of sleep, resulting in lower grades and reduced academic achievement. (Wolfson,



A. R., & Carskadon, M. A. (1998). Adolescent sleep patterns: issues and recommendations. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*, 19(6), 425-428.)

- **Increased behavioral problems:** Irritability and difficulty regulating emotions due to sleep deprivation can lead to increased disciplinary issues. (Fredriksen, K., Rhodes, J., Reddy, R., & Way, N. (2004). Sleepless in Chicago: tracking the effects of adolescent sleep patterns during the transition to college. *Child Development*, 75(1), 82-95.)

Furthermore, the lack of sleep can contribute to unhealthy habits such as increased caffeine and sugar consumption, which further disrupts sleep patterns and overall health.

By implementing a later school start time, LD 396 would directly address these issues. This change would allow students to align their sleep schedules with their natural biological rhythms, leading to improved physical and mental health, enhanced academic performance, and a safer school environment.

MASN recognizes the critical link between sleep, health, and academic performance as shown in evidence-based research and therefore we recommend a favorable vote on LD 396.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alana Trottier BS, RN, CCRN President

Maine Association of School Nurses

Executive Committee:

President: Alana Trottier, BS, RN, CCRN

Immediate Past President: Angie Buker, MSN, RN, NCSN

Secretary: Janet Rivard, BSN, RN, NCSN

Treasurer: Donna Jordan, BSN, RN, CCM

NASN Director: Lisa McKenna, MSN, RN, NCSN

MDOE School Nurse Consultant: Emily Poland, MPH, RN, NCSN