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Hello! My name is Mia Dawbin, I grew up in West Gardiner, and I'm writing to you today in support of later start times for high school students.

As a middle/high schooler dealing with untreated (and undiagnosed ADHD), school day mornings were impossible for me. When the bus arrives before 7, it never feels like there's enough time.

Teenagers in general (and especially those with ADHD) naturally have a delayed circadian rhythm in comparison to adults. Being forced to wake up and go to class before it felt like my brain was turned on made it incredibly difficult to stay awake and concentrate, and I would always end the day overstimulated with a migraine. I'd get off the bus and be cranky to my mom - I'm sure any moms in the legislature have at times experienced the other end of that bargain. If I hadn't been able to switch to online school, I probably would have dropped out over those extra 2 hours of sleep. The pain and constant exhaustion weren't worth it, and I didn't feel like I was learning much anyway.

We need to provide our children with the best opportunity to learn, and that means structuring the school day to successfully work with their physiology, not against it. Our laws regarding teenagers should prioritize two things for them: their health, and their education. There are no better priorities for a developing young person.

If sports schedules need to change, so be it. Sports should be about teaching them to work on a team and encouraging them to be active. Our public school districts are already coming up with novel and collaborative solutions to our local struggles, such as combining sports teams to make up for low participation or funding and shared bus routes to optimize efficiency.

The public health research is clear, for the good of their health and their ability to learn, we need to let teenagers sleep in a little bit more. It's a matter of mutual respect. Thank you for your time and consideration, I trust you will make the right decision for our youth.