

March 18, 2019

**RE: In Support of AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS REVISIONS AND ADDITIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES --
Raised Bill No. 1069**

Dear Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez and Members of the Education Committee:

I am writing to express my support for the inclusion of new content taught in our schools. Specifically, I support the addition of the topics: *sexual harassment and assault, adolescent relationship abuse and intimate partner violence, human trafficking, including commercial sexual exploitation* to Sec. 7. Subsection (a). I also request that you add **sleep education and hygiene** to the list of wellness and human development topics. Further, I request that you **support and schedule a hearing for HB6206, An Act Concerning Later Middle and High School Start Times**. There is an almost weekly publication of new research all demonstrating how critical sleep is to our health and emotional wellness. Yet our adolescents are suffering sleep deprivation on a daily basis. This is of vital importance to the health and well-being of each of our CT students, however, many of the high schools in our state start much earlier than recommended.

Plainly put, our current system is making children sick, both physically and emotionally. In addition to the research and policy statements made by health and government agencies, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Center for Disease Control, and the American Psychological Association, my local board of education has heard testimony from our local pediatricians, psychiatrists, psychologists, Project Resilience, public health professionals, school nurses & nutritionists, parents, and even students requesting a change to the start times. To ignore the research not work to align the start times of CT schools with the current medical recommendation is irresponsible.

Science tells us that our growing adolescents need 8 ½ to 9 ½ hours of sleep a night, but according to the CDC only 31% of teens across the nation get even 8 hours of sleep. Chronic sleep deprivation affects teen's ability to learn, their health and safety, and their overall quality of life. It's not just the amount of sleep that's important, but also the time during which they sleep. Due to the adolescent sleep phase delay, students are biologically not able to fall asleep before 10 or 11 at night because they do not begin to release the sleep hormone, melatonin, until that time. Adolescents continue to release melatonin until approximately 8 am... at least 35 minutes after Ridgefield High School and other high schools across the state have begun! Imagine the stress on their bodies as they try to stay alert in class while under the influence of sleep hormones. Some students are driving in under those conditions. Some students self-medicate with caffeine and other drugs to fight their biological need to be asleep at that time.

We spend so much time and money creating new classes, enhancing curricula, but if our kids are in school too early with the melatonin still cruising throughout their bodies, then they aren't learning or performing at their best.

You have the power to build an educational environment that *respects* the health and learning of our youth. I'm not saying that this is going to fix all the issues our adolescents face, but I am confident it will help just as it has helped other students. Schools/districts that have made the change for the health and learning opportunities for their kids see the large and small benefits to physical and mental health, learning, attendance, graduation rates, car crashes, and overall student well-being. It is time that we do the same for the kids in Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration,

Colleen Broderick
Ridgefield, CT