

Dear Co-Chairs Sen. McCrory and Rep. Sanchez and the distinguished members of the Education Committee:

I am writing to request an amendment to HB [1069](#) to include the provision that high school start times not start before 8:30 am. HB 1060 Sec. 7. Subsection (a) of section 10-16b states that children must be taught health and safety including but not limited to physical, mental and emotional health, including youth suicide prevention. Given that the bill focuses on these issues, it seems appropriate that the committee work not just to educate students on the facts but that the committee actually act on these facts.

As you may know, the [AMA](#), the [CDC](#), the [American Psychological Association](#), and the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) have all issued statements suggesting middle and high schools start after 8:30 am, due to the overwhelming scientific evidence that school start times impact the health and safety of children. This is because teens are physiologically unable to fall asleep before around 11:00 pm and require 9 hours of sleep per night for their health and wellbeing. Thus, requiring them to wake up at 6:00 or 7:00 am leads to chronic sleep deprivation.

In this impressive body of research including dozens of studies, the effect of later bell times is unequivocal. Schools that have moved to later start times have documented increases in graduation rates, reductions in tardiness and missed school days; reductions in mental health complaints including depression, anxiety, and thoughts of suicide; reduction in impulsive behaviors including substance abuse; reduction in car accidents; reduction in sports injuries; and some evidence of improved test scores and academic performance.

Just recently, two important articles have added to this large dataset. This [first one](#), which received national attention on [NPR](#), The [New York Times](#), and [even IFLS](#) demonstrated several important new findings. First, students saw an increase in time spent sleeping. In other words, they did not just go to bed later. Second, grades improved. Third, attendance improved. Importantly, these improvements were greatest for economically disadvantaged students. This [second one](#) had a similar important take home message that later start times were associated with positive student engagement outcomes (reduced suspensions, higher course grades), especially for disadvantaged students.

Taken together this research highlights the impact that later start times will likely have on **closing the achievement gap and providing support to our most vulnerable students.**

Several towns in CT have either moved to later times or are looking into it. Newtown, Wilton, Greenwich, and Guilford have already made the move. Ridgefield, West Hartford, Norwalk, New Canaan, Westport, Bethel, Brookfield and Simsbury are well along the road in doing research and planning. Despite the initiative taken in these towns, there are still over 100 districts, many of them underserved (and thus most likely to benefit), who have not begun the discussion despite medical recommendations that were made many years ago.

You may know that Kevin Sullivan introduced statewide legislation 10 years ago. We believe it is time to revisit that legislation to create parity among districts while removing some of the perceived roadblocks, notably athletics. On the town level, officials are nervous about getting out later than the neighboring schools, thereby complicating game times. If all schools were required to move to later times, that concern would be eliminated. Moreover, it is just better for all of our students.

We would appreciate a time to meet and answer any questions.

Sincerely,

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