

**BILL:** House Bill 1418  
**TITLE:** Public Middle and High Schools – Start Time for Instruction – Requirement  
**POSITION:** OPPOSE  
**DATE:** March 6, 2024  
**COMMITTEE:** Ways & Means  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes House Bill 1418.

On behalf of all local boards of education, MABE supports local board discretion to determine school and school system start-times, without the imposition of a state standard. House Bill 1081 would impose one-size-fits-all statewide changes to middle and high school start times. In this way, the bill would establish a state program for the purpose of promoting a major shift in a policy area appropriately in the purview of each local board of education.

MABE recognizes the now longstanding attention to the issue of determining appropriate school start times for the school day. This issue involves community-drive requests that local boards of education consider student transportation and other scheduling and logistic issues toward the goal of ensuring that the school day, especially for adolescents, start later in the morning in the interest of allowing students ample time for sleep. At the same time, major shifts in school start times have generated costly feasibility studies, and costly modifications to student transportation management and routing systems. Again, MABE fairly believes such considerations should reside with the local board and school system administration.

MABE representatives participated in the work of the Maryland Department of Health and other stakeholders to conduct a 2014 Study of Safe and Healthy School Hours for Maryland Public Schools; a study called for in legislation (House Bill 883). The report addressed the science on the sleep needs of children and adolescents and made recommendations regarding whether public schools should implement a starting time of no earlier than 8:00 a.m.

MABE believes the Health Department’s study struck the appropriate balance in its recommendations, which stated that the department “recognizes the connection between sufficient sleep and student health and wellness. To that end, the Department encouraged the Maryland State Board of Education to use its authority to advise local school systems of the benefits of a later school start time policies, and to encourage them to conduct feasibility studies regarding the implementation of school starting times of 8 a.m. or later.” MABE continues to support this approach as reflecting a reasonable balance between state guidance and local decision-making on such a major policy and operational issue.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 1081.