



April 12, 2019

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The Honorable Connie Leyva
Chair, Senate Education Committee
State Capitol Room 4061
Sacramento, CA 95841

Submitted via the Senate Education Committee online portal

RE: SB 328 (Portantino) Healthy School Start Time - **SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Leyva:

On behalf of the board of directors of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM), and nearly 600 AASM members and 123 accredited sleep facilities in California, I am writing to express strong support for Senate Bill No. 328 (SB 328), "Pupil attendance: school start time," which would require the school day for middle schools and high schools to begin no earlier than 8:30 a.m. by July 1, 2022.

In puberty a natural shift occurs in the timing of the body's internal "circadian" clock, causing most teens to experience a biological drive for a late-night bedtime. Therefore, early middle school and high school start times make it difficult for students to get the 8 to 10 hours of nightly sleep that the AASM recommends for optimal teen health. Simply going to bed earlier is not a realistic option for most teens. As a result, nearly 73 percent of high school students report getting fewer than 8 hours of sleep on an average school night, increasing their risk of depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation and motor vehicle accidents.

It is the position of the AASM that middle school and high school start times should be 8:30 a.m. or later to promote teen health, well-being, safety and learning. While it is true that an operational change in school start times does not automatically assure that every teen will get more sleep on school nights, research suggests that later school start times are associated with longer weekday sleep durations, reduced vehicular accident rates, and improved alertness. In contrast, maintaining an early school start time guarantees that most teens will fail to get sufficient sleep during the school week.

Teen students in California deserve the opportunity to start each day awake, alert, and ready to learn. While the local governing boards of some school districts in the state have been able to implement healthier school start times, school boards in other districts continue to maintain the status quo, failing to prioritize the health and safety of their students and putting them at a competitive disadvantage. SB 328 will level the playing field for all students in the state by establishing a healthy boundary for the beginning of the school day while still allowing local school boards to choose a start time of 8:30 a.m. or later.

Please demonstrate the importance of prioritizing student health and set an example for the rest of the nation by supporting this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DK', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Douglas B. Kirsch, MD
President

cc: Senator Anthony Portantino
Steve Van Hout, AASM Executive Director