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May 11, 2023

Dear Governor DeSantis:

On behalf of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM), and nearly 400 AASM members and 130 accredited sleep facilities in Florida, I am writing to express strong support for House Bill No. 733 (HB 733), "Middle School and High School Start Times," which would require the school day to begin no earlier than 8 a.m. for middle schools and 8:30 a.m. for high schools.

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, about 78% 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.

Teen students in Florida 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. HB 733 would promote education and health equity for children in Florida and help level the playing field for all students to succeed.

By passing HB 733, Florida legislators have prioritized the health of students across the state. Please solidify Florida's commitment to student health by signing this bill into law.

Sincerely,

Jennifer L. Martin, PhD
President