



health, safety and equity in education

The Honorable Courtney Neron
House Education Committee
900 Court St. NE, H-281
Salem, OR 97301

March 25, 2025

Re: Support for House Bill 2359 (Relating to School Start Times)

Dear Chair Neron, Vice Chair Dobson, Vice Chair McIntire, and House Education Committee Members:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify **in support of House Bill 2359**, an essential and groundbreaking piece of public health and child-protection legislation that will help local communities ensure school hours promoting student health, safety, and school performance.

I am the Executive Director and Co-Founder of Start School Later/Healthy Hours, a non-profit coalition with two Oregon chapters. I have a doctorate in the history of science and medicine, and my work as a medical writer has included co-authoring of *The Harvard Guide to Women's Health* and serving as an associate editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*. In my professional as well as my personal experience in school board politics and in raising three teenagers, I have experienced the toll too-early bell times take on the next generation, as well as the difficulty many local districts have returning to safe, healthy, and common-sense hours.

What I experienced with my now grown children has kept me working for decades to address this critical matter of child health and safety that local districts have trouble addressing—even when school leaders were trying to do so. I've seen the same story play out all over the country: schools try to change bell times, but they almost always face pushback from communities who fear change and don't understand why they are being asked to do it. I've also seen many districts make this change and discover these fears are unfounded and that safe, healthy hours are both feasible and affordable. **Still, fear and speculation often stop change, and kids get caught up in the gears.**

The result is significant, unnecessary harm to student sleep, health, safety, and school performance, as recognized by both the medical and education communities, including the American Medical Association (AMA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National PTA, National Education Association (NEA), and American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)—which, in 2014, first recommended that secondary schools start no earlier than 8:30 a.m.

This legislation empowers districts to address these challenges and to prioritize student well-being over competing adult interests. Importantly, and contrary to common misperceptions:

1. **This bill is NOT a mandate. It is a guardrail** setting a reasonable and medically recommended floor on how early schools can require attendance. (We all already live by similar mental guardrails—e.g., no one would consider starting class at 3 a.m.)

Testimony in Support of HB 2359 from Start School Later

2. **This bill respects local control** by empowering districts to set any schedules that work for their communities so long as those schedules are safe and healthy.
3. **This bill provides districts with support to find feasible, affordable ways to run schools at safe, healthy hours** following evidence-based practices from Oregon and beyond.

Not insignificantly, **this legislation will also benefit Oregon's economy**: The [RAND Corporation projects](#) that starting middle and high school classes no earlier than 8:30 a.m. could boost Oregon's economy by at least \$83 million (0.04% of state GDP) after 2 years, \$338 million (0.16% of GDP) after 5 years, \$778 million (0.36% of GDP) after 10 years, and \$2 billion after 20 years, with benefits far outweighing any immediate costs of change.

Sleep and school hours are a public health and equity issue like child labor, smoking, and seatbelts and therefore require oversight by state leaders elected to protect the public good. In many districts today, students and their parents must choose between compliance with school hours and adequate sleep. **Setting parameters for safe, healthy hours is just as appropriate for Oregon as establishing standards for the number of instructional days or hours, or any of Oregon's many laws promoting student health and well-being.** This is a case where, as Dr. Judith Owens of Harvard Medical School has observed, "**to do nothing is to do harm.**"

The eyes of the nation are on Oregon, which is poised to become the **first state in the nation to pass student-led legislation to protect adolescents from unsafe, unhealthy, and counterproductive school hours.** I urge you to support HB 2359 to help make this a reality and to ensure that a student's opportunity for healthy sleep and its many benefits does not vary by zip code.

Sincerely,

Terra Ziporyn Snider, Ph.D.
Executive Director and Co-Founder
Start School Later, Inc.