



Doernbecher  
Children's Hospital

School of Medicine  
Division of General Pediatrics

**Benjamin Hoffman MD, FAAP  
CPST-I**

Professor of Pediatrics  
Vice-Chair for Community Health  
and Advocacy  
Director, Oregon Center for  
Children and Youth with  
Special Health Needs  
Medical Director, Tom Sargent  
Safety Center

Immediate Past-President,  
American Academy of  
Pediatrics

Mail code: CDRCP  
707 SW Gaines Street  
Portland, OR 97239-2998

hoffmanb@ohsu.edu

tel 503 494-6513  
fax 503 494-1542  
www.ohsu.edu

March 24, 2025

Dear Chairs Neron, Vice-Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and members of the committee:

My name is Dr. Ben Hoffman, I am a practicing pediatrician at Doernbecher Children's Hospital, Portland, and the Immediate Past President of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I am here to express my strongest support for HB 2539 that would require school start times for that align with the physiologic needs of adolescents in the Oregon schools.

Simply put, we are failing our kids, perpetuating programs and policies that fly in the face of existing science around sleep and the biologic imperatives of adolescents. As Oregonians, I know we recognize the value of our youth and can all agree that ensuring their success to become the next generation of leaders is critical. We owe it to our kids and our community to support them in a way that meets their biologic needs to help them succeed.

While the science of sleep can be complex, the facts around adolescent sleep are pretty easy to understand. It is a well-established fact that teens need between 8.5 and 9 hours of sleep per night. It is estimated, however, that presently, fewer than 1/3 of high school students get more than 7 hours of sleep. While many teens may look like young adults, their biology is fundamentally different. Pubertal changes in the sleep wake cycle mean that most adolescents will get their best, most restful sleep between 11pm and 8 AM. At present, in the U.S., almost half of public high schools still commence classes before 8 AM. I have 3 children who have gone through PPS, and I can personally attest to the struggle of getting them out of bed and out the door for the 8:10 first bell, or even worse, the 7 AM Zero Hour.

We must ask ourselves why it is this way. To a large degree, it is because it has always been this way. Patterns and expectations are set, and change, even when it is easy, is hard. In most cases, school start times are based on anachronistic needs for agricultural workers and outmoded transportation programs. Granted, the implications of effecting changes in high school start times include broader issues of transportation to elementary and middle schools across Oregon, and this will impact the start times of pre-high school students. I do not pretend that these effects will be easy to mitigate. I do, however, believe that they are worth addressing. I would strongly argue that the known science, and the experience of a number of school districts on our state, and across the country, suggest that delaying high school start times until at least 8:30 AM is the absolutely, positively, the right thing to do.

First, trusted and empiric medical and health organizations strongly support this initiative. The American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control all recommend that middle and high school classes start no earlier than 8:30. A large, multi state analysis from the University of Minnesota and the CDC concluded that delayed high school start times resulted in significantly fewer car crashes, decreased tardiness and absenteeism, as well as higher scores on national standardized tests. A report by the Brookings Institution showed that the associated increases in test score were twice as great for students from marginalized, and minoritized communities. I would also suggest that later is better when it comes to this issue. The 8:30 recommendation was based on the fact that teenagers need 8.5 to 9 hours of sleep and just don't get tired until 11. But most





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people don't fall asleep as soon as they first get tired, so realistically, we can't expect most of them to be asleep until at least 11:30. If they are to get 8.5 hours of sleep, let alone 9:00, that means they need to sleep until 8:00 - but we can't expect them to get up and get to school in half an hour. Seattle has pushed the clock back to 8:45 for some schools, 8:55 for others. I would recommend 9 myself.

In reviewing the literature that exists and the facts that are known, there is little doubt that teens would benefit from later school start times, and that those benefits will ultimately benefit our communities. As with most things, such a change would necessarily impact other parts of our school environment, and that there will invariably be resistance to change. I suspect, however, that if we take a student centered approach, with an eye towards achieving the greatest good while striving to minimize the impact on families and students that we can all benefit. Communities in Corvallis, Clackamas, Lake Oswego and Washington County, as well as Seattle, have successfully found ways to address this conundrum, and issues such as this require bold and enlightened leadership to do the right thing.

As a pediatrician, my career has been guided by one simple principle, and that is to do what is best for kids. I urge you to employ that principle, and address the biologic needs of teens to allow them to thrive, to make us all proud, and become the leaders to take our fair city forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "B Hoffman MD".

Benjamin Hoffman MD FAAP CPST-I