

March 26, 2025

RE: HB 2359

To the House Education Committee:

I am writing to encourage you to support HB 2359 which requires school districts and public charter schools to implement a schedule for high schools that does not start regular instructional hours before 8:30 am.

I have been a school counselor for twenty years and I have worked in education for thirty years, mostly at the high school level. I have had the opportunity to work at various schools in Portland Public Schools and the Gresham Barlow School District. During this time, we have had students attend school starting anywhere from 7:30 - 8:30 am. I have observed students in the various start times and there are three reasons why I support the later start:

a)Sleep: As you are aware, the supporters of this bill have provided a lot of research that teens need a lot of sleep for physical and mental development. I also believe that most teens are “wired” to go to bed later and sleep later.

b)Transportation: At my non neighborhood school, students come from all over the Portland metro area. While school starts at 8:30 am, many of my students have to leave their house much earlier to get to school on time. Last year, I had a student whose daily commute to school was an hour and a half. She was leaving her house when it was dark in the morning. For safety reasons, it is preferable if they leave their house when it is light out.

c)Family support: Many of my students are responsible for getting their younger siblings to school because their parents work. When we have had earlier start times for high school students, we sacrifice the education of the older siblings. I had some students who missed 20-30 minutes of instruction a day getting another sibling to school.

I have been a Board Member of the Oregon School Counseling Association and I have worked with school counselors across Oregon. While I strongly support this bill, I would like school districts to be able to apply for a waiver or an exemption for our districts in rural Oregon where this could be a challenge.

Thank you for considering this bill. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about my testimony.

Sincerely,

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