



health, safety and equity in education

U.S. Representative Zoe Lofgren
House of Representatives
United States Capitol
Washington, D.C.

April 27, 2017

Dear Representative Lofgren:

Thank you for introducing the **ZZZ's to A's Act** into the 115th Congress.

As you well know, the vast majority of middle and high schools in the United States begin at times that are not healthy, safe or developmentally-appropriate for adolescents. Too many schools are starting in the 7 a.m. hour, a time that can require a student to wake long before dawn. In fact, in some school districts, teenagers are expected to be at their bus stops in the 5 a.m. hour.

Early school day start times persist despite recommendations by the **American Academy of Pediatrics**, the **American Medical Association**, the **U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** and other health and education experts that middle and high schools *not* begin the school day any earlier than 8:30 a.m.

The recommendations have been issued due to most school districts starting middle and high schools at times that are inconsistent with the developmental norms of adolescence, which is a time during which a young person's sleep-wake cycles naturally begin later at night and end later in the morning. Early school start times combined with the inability of most adolescents to actually fall *asleep* before 11 p.m. — even if they get into bed and put away all electronics hours earlier — results in chronic sleep loss and for many teens poor health, poor school attendance, poor grades and an overall impaired ability to learn.

An additional problem caused by such early school hours for teenagers is that — as you know, and as studies and FBI crime statistics confirm — criminal and risky behaviors involving teens increase during the period of time after which students have been released from school and are often entirely unsupervised until a parent has returned from work.

As a nonprofit grassroots, volunteer-run advocacy organization consisting of health professionals, educators, parents and students, Start School Later seeks safe, healthy and developmentally-appropriate school hours for all public school children. Start School Later supporters are working through nearly 100 chapters nationwide to raise awareness about and inspire action toward solving this fixable problem.

Members of Start School Later and supporters of safe, healthy and developmentally-appropriate school hours will be contacting their members of Congress to ask that that they co-sponsor and vote for the **Zzz's to A's Act**.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to this issue.

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