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March 14, 2017

The Honorable Anthony J. Portantino  
State Capitol, Room 3086  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Fax: (916) 651-4925

RE: SB 328 (Portantino): Pupil attendance: school start time  
AAP-CA Position: Support

Dear Senator Portantino:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA), representing over 5,000 California pediatricians, strongly supports your proposed legislation SB 328 (Portantino). This bill would require that the school day for middle and high schools start no earlier than 8:30 a.m.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, nearly 3 in 5 middle schoolers, and almost 9 in 10 high school students, do not get enough sleep every night. While many factors contribute to this, “the evidence strongly suggests that a too-early start to the school day is a critical contributor to chronic sleep deprivation among American adolescents,” according to the AAP press release “Let Them Sleep: AAP Recommends Delaying Start Times of Middle and High Schools to Combat Teen Sleep Deprivation.” Due to hormonal changes, most teenagers naturally fall asleep later than younger children and older adults, and rise later as well—unless their sleep is interrupted by a 6 a.m. alarm, in which case they will go to school poorly rested. This has serious health effects: chronic sleep deprivation has been linked to conditions such as depression, weight gain, irritability, inattentiveness, academic difficulties, and more. Many older teens who drive themselves to school also wind up “driving drowsy,” which can be as dangerous as driving under the influence of alcohol.

This is a public health issue that deserves a serious, immediate response. Luckily, unlike many public health issues, it has a simple and obvious fix: start school later. Studies have shown that when school starts later, teens generally use the extra time to sleep. This is why AAP policy holds that “middle and high schools should aim for a starting time of no earlier than 8:30 AM,” which is exactly what SB 328 (Portantino) requires.

Pediatricians strongly support SB 328 (Portantino). We thank you for your public service and for your leadership on behalf of the health and well-being of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nancy Graff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nancy" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Graff".

Nancy Graff, M.D., Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics  
State Government Affairs Committee, American Academy of Pediatrics, California

CC: Kris Calvin, CEO; AAP-CA Leadership; Lydia Bourne