

American Academy of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS, CALIFORNIA

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April 2, 2019
Senator Connie M. Leyva
Chair, Senate Committee on Education
State Capitol, Room 2083
Sacramento, CA 95814

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

Dear Senator Leyva:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA), representing over 5,000 California pediatricians, strongly supports proposed legislation SB 328 (Portantino). This bill would require that the regular school day for middle and high schools start no earlier than 8:30 a.m., as specified (with rural school districts exempted) so that adolescents may have a chance at adequate sleep.

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) and respectfully urge an AYE vote. 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,

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; AAP-CA Leadership; Lydia Bourne; The Honorable Anthony Portantino

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