



ASSEMBLY FLOOR ALERT

DATE: September 5, 2017
TO: Members of the California State Assembly
SUBJECT: SB 328 (Portantino)
POSITION: OPPOSE

On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing California statewide groups and local education agencies, we are writing to respectfully oppose SB 328 (Portantino) which is currently on the Assembly Floor. This measure would require middle and high schools in California to change their school day start time to no earlier than 8:30 a.m.

Our organizations recognize the importance of maximizing student sleep time, and the education community understands that we must care for “the whole child” in order to ensure that our students will be prepared to learn. However, we must oppose SB 328 because it fails to recognize the negative and disproportionate safety, fiscal, family and community impacts of imposing a one-size-fits all mandate to the determination of when our local schools begin the instructional day. We firmly believe this is a decision that is best made by locally elected school district trustees—informed by input from parents, teachers and other stakeholders—who understand the needs of their students and community.

We oppose this bill because in many communities, it will not actually result in students getting more sleep. In fact, the bill could have a disproportionately negative impact on lower-income and working families, particularly laborers and service industry employees who do not have the schedule flexibility that people in more affluent communities enjoy. The bill fails to address the reality that most working parents don’t have the option of starting their work day later. Given that there is already too little funding for before school programs in our state, SB 328 leaves working parents with limited options that fail to ensure the safety of their children. Many of these parents will drop their children off at school at the same time they do now—regardless of whether there is supervision—thereby extending the day, instead of delaying its start.

Home-to-school transportation in California is also underfunded. As such, a vast majority of California schools must stagger their school pick-up times over a broader range of time to transport students within a limited supply of buses. Typically, school districts must deploy their bus fleets on multiple runs each day to serve elementary and secondary schools. The ability of school districts to manage and maximize the efficient use of their bus fleet is contingent upon being able to stagger their school start times. This bill would require the purchase of additional buses and the hiring of additional bus drivers to meet local needs if the range of available school start times is reduced. Since SB 328 does not provide resources to cover these costs, the bill will divert resources away from core educational services.

It is important to note that examples of out-of-state schools that have implemented later school start times, frequently cited by proponents of this bill, may not be applicable given the greater resources available in other states to address these unintended consequences.

It is our hope that proponents of this measure will instead choose to work with the education community to understand the many other barriers to education our students face, and the constraints under which public schools operate, to craft guidance and best practices for local decision makers on how to help students get adequate sleep.

An informed and responsible decision about which school start times will best protect the health and safety of our students in a state as large, geographically and socio-economically diverse as ours can only be made by locally-elected school board members, with input from parents, teachers and other stakeholders.

For all of these reasons, we must respectfully oppose SB 328 (Portantino) and ask for your "NO" vote when it comes before you on the Assembly Floor.

Sincerely,



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Legislative Advocate
California School Boards Association



Michael Hulsizer
Chief Deputy for Governmental Affairs
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