Urge Your Legislators to **Support this Important Legislation** for Public Health

Over the last two decades, sleep researchers and medical experts have shown that adolescents need about 9 hours of sleep a night for healthy growth and development. They have also confirmed that biological rhythms (the "circadian clock") shift at puberty, leading teens to naturally fall asleep around 2-3 hours later than younger children and older adults. As a result, teenagers required to wake up for school before about 8 a.m. cannot get enough sleep at the times their growing brains and bodies most need it—no matter what time they go to bed.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and many other professional health organizations advise middle and high schools start at 8:30 a.m. or later.

The adverse effects of insufficient and poorly timed sleep in teens often cause real suffering and illness, and they can be heart-breaking and even life-threatening – including higher rates of car crashes, depression, anxiety, suicide, substance misuse, obesity, disruptive and risk-taking behavior, sleeping in class, inattention, tardiness, absenteeism, and dropping out. These harmful effects of early school start times on adolescent sleep and mental health are also now exacerbated by the unprecedented stress on adolescents due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has increased their risk of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation.

Early school hours are a public health problem requiring statewide action to protect adolescent mental and physical health and safety.

We are heartened that Speaker Coughlin and Senator Gopal have introduced legislation in the New Jersey Senate and Assembly to protect our states' high school students from harmfully early school start times before 8:30 a.m., as advised by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Now our lawmakers need to hear from you.

As a pediatrician, medical, research, and/or public health professional - please ask your legislators to support this bill (A3816/S2462) for the health and wellbeing of New Jersey adolescents! Every day that passes without it is at the expense of student health and safety.

How You Can Help:

- **Contact your Legislators today through our easy form letter.** Click here to share a message of your support:
  - Pediatricians & Health Professionals
  - Parents & Families
- **E-mail us** at mhc@njaap.org with your stories/statements about:
  - how early school start times have negatively impacted your adolescent, or
  - benefits that your adolescent has experienced if they attend a school that starts later