

Maryland State Department
Board of Education

Dear Members of the Board:

I would like to submit the following concerns regarding the conduct of the BCPS Commissioners specifically surrounding the Charter School lawsuit and mysterious firing of our former CEO, Dr. Thornton and the non-transparent hiring of soon to be CEO. I have serious concerns about the Commissioners on the following matters:

- Lack of parent participation on key committees that have bearings on policies
- Lack of transparency when hiring the last CEO
- Failure to follow up on parent's request for information regarding 21st century schools constructions
- Failure to have a viable plan in accordance with the 21st Century MOU to hire students attending City Schools
- Failure to have a viable plan in place to offset the Central Office support available to traditional schools since the large lay offs at North Ave.
- Failure to have a more convenient process by which parents can testify before the Commissioners
- The injustice of appropriating 5500 base per pupil allotment in the poorest of neighborhoods while given 9500 base dollars to charter schools
- Failure to provide a comprehensive process with supporting data which proves that Baltimore City families have equal opportunity to get into charter schools.

Baltimore, Maryland is located in the United States of America which is a democracy. A few months ago I saw on MSDE website an announcement for a replacement superintendent, but in BCPS fired and then hired a CEO without any public notification. I want to understand how the MSDE, Governor did and Mayor of Baltimore City allowed that to happen. The lawsuit concerning the charter schools, as I understand, is currently at the MSDE level which I to agree. When deciding on the matter please keep in mind that this matter affects all children in the state of Maryland. This is a pleural matter and not just a singular one pertaining to only Baltimore City. As a parent I speak for myself but I know others feel the same way that I do, we are tired of the school board commissioners excluding some parent while including others in the decision making process. BCPS has recreated a two tier education system which gives the poorest of Black children a greater chance at being incarcerated.

Sincerely,

Mary Alexander

PEOPLE FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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June 10, 2016

Board of School Commissioners
Baltimore City Schools
200 E. North Avenue
Room 406
Baltimore, MD 21202

RE: 2016 Charter School Applications for SY 2017-18 and SY 2018-19

Dear School Board Commissioners,

People for Public Schools (PPS) is an independent, grassroots advocacy organization formed in fall 2015 by Baltimore City Public Schools parents and supporters. We are concerned about the potential impact of the lawsuit filed by charter schools against the District. Representing the interests of nearly 400 Baltimore City parents, grandparents, teachers, and community members who are affiliated with more than 30 traditional, contract, and charter schools, we are advocates for fair and equitable funding for all schools and all students – no matter what type of school they attend.

In regard to the Board's recent hearing on proposed charter school expansions and the Board's upcoming vote on these proposals, we have one request: Do not approve any new charter schools, conversions, or expansions unless and until the Board and the school system can determine and demonstrate their potential impact – in individual cases and on the whole – on existing school budgets.

Traditional school parents, community members, teachers and staff deserve to know the costs to their schools of the founding of a new charter school, a charter expansion, or a conversion of an existing traditional school to a public charter school – as well as the startup and incremental costs of any combination of these events. Everyone in the school system deserves to know how these fundamental shifts will affect our schools. The Board has a fiduciary responsibility to project the impact of new charter schools on surrounding schools and the school system as a whole.

In light of current circumstances, it is impossible for the Board to meet that obligation. BCPSS is engaged in a lawsuit over charter school funding, and the acceptability of the funding formula the school system uses is in question. Not until the lawsuit is resolved and an equitable funding formula is affirmed should the school system seriously consider adding more charter schools or increasing the number of charter school seats.

Under the current charter funding formula, we know that any growth in the number of charter seats in Baltimore City will create additional burdens on traditional school budgets and the students those budgets support. During information sessions led by City Schools last fall to educate the public on its then recently introduced charter funding formula, City Schools staff noted that it would be impossible to fund every school in the system the way they fund charter schools; there is not enough money. By comparing sets of similarly sized traditional and charter

People for Public Schools, <http://ppsbmore.org/>, is an independent, grassroots advocacy group of Baltimore City Public School parents and supporters. Please contact us at ppsbmore@gmail.com for more information.

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schools, and looking at budgets of conversion charters before and after conversion, PPS can show that charter schools receive more funding than traditional schools. The disparity is clear where it counts most: in the ratios of students-to-staff and students-to-teachers.

Right now, rather than expand choice, an expansion of charter seats will increasingly place Baltimore City students in a two-tiered public education system – in which one is better funded at the expense of the other. We must not further exacerbate existing inequities by adding charter school seats without a proper assessment of their true costs.

Thank you for your leadership on this critical issue and your thoughtful consideration of this request.

Dyslexia Testimony

June 28, 2016

President Smith and members of the Maryland State Board of Education,

I am Hope Meisinger-Blaschak, a member of Decoding Dyslexia Maryland and the Co-Chair of Baltimore County's Special Education Citizens' Advisory Committee. I am also the mother of a dyslexic child. I am here to talk about what is happening to dyslexic students in our state's school systems.

Longitudinal studies have estimated that up to 17% of the population is dyslexic. That means approximately 143,000 dyslexic students are attending Maryland public schools. Dyslexia adversely affects a range of language skills including reading, writing and spelling. It is NOT the reversal of b's and d's or reading words backwards. It is not a sign of poor intelligence or laziness. Much of what happens in a classroom is based on reading and writing so it is important for the 3 to 4 dyslexic students per class to be identified early so they can be in a position to benefit from structured literacy instruction and not fall behind their peers. According to leading international expert Dr. Sally Shaywitz, students with dyslexia need a structured approach to literacy acquisition as early as possible. Early identification through universal screening in Kindergarten and 1st grade is essential.

As a dyslexic student, my daughter is one of the fortunate ones. We were able to identify her dyslexia in first grade because we have a family history of dyslexia. That early identification means my daughter doesn't have to spend years in school, feeling stupid, wondering why she can't read like her peers. Most dyslexic students aren't identified until they are in at least third or fourth grade. She is also fortunate to have a private tutor teaching her to read using structured literacy -- an explicit, sequential and multisensory method of teaching reading that has been proven to work for dyslexic students.

Unfortunately, my daughter's public school does not have teachers trained to teach the foundations of reading so students like my daughter can learn to read. Teachers are not graduating from college with the knowledge about dyslexia and struggling readers or the ability to teach them. My daughter's dyslexia evaluation and her ongoing specialized tutoring is paid for by my family and happens after my 7 year old spends a full day at school. My family and I make this our priority because we do not want to waste the window of opportunity when these interventions are most effective.

Imagine yourself in the first grade, doing your best, but struggling to follow along as the class reads a book. You wonder why everyone else in the class can read and understand, but you can't, no matter how hard you try. Even though dyslexic students often have above average intelligence, we equate intelligence with ability to read. This is especially true in school — and children see it that same way. When a child isn't reading as well as their peers they feel stupid and school causes them stress and anxiety.

Dyslexic students often develop strategies to avoid embarrassing situations. They make frequent trips to the nurse, or the bathroom when they might be asked to read or answer questions related to a text. They act out or become the class clown; being being bad or

silly is better than being considered stupid. Many students can hold it together all day at school- only to come home and vent their pent up frustration on their parents or siblings. Although individuals with dyslexia can have great talents and achievements, more typically, dyslexia is associated with reduced educational attainment and poor academic self-esteem. Dyslexic students are often teased and bullied... those effects are devastating and lifelong.

Middle school and high school is even more difficult for dyslexic students because the reading volume and difficulty increase exponentially. For the student who is reading several grade levels behind, keeping up in history or science can be almost impossible. NIH has linked juvenile crime, drug use, incarceration rates, and dropout rates to reading failure. We know that 85% of juvenile offenders are functionally illiterate. A University of Texas study determined that 50% of their prison population was dyslexic. There has been a great deal of discussion about the pipeline to prison. Education is a central pillar of that conversation. We know that improving literacy rates is crucial in reducing incarceration rates.

We believe that Maryland can be on the forefront of this effort to improve literacy and ultimately change the fate for so many who lack opportunities and a bright future. We can screen all students in Kindergarten and first grade, have knowledgeable teachers and provide effective, research-based, early interventions. We can and must do more to insure that each student in Maryland realizes their full potential through their civil right to read.

Thank you.

Hope Meisinger-Blaschak

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Co-Chair Baltimore County Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee

Member of Decoding Dyslexia Maryland

<http://www.decodingdyslexiamd.org/>



June 28, 2016

Good Afternoon Maryland Board of Education and Superintendent Salmon,

I am Lisa VanBuskirk from Edgewater, a mother of a 4 year old and 6 year old. I am the Chapter Leader of Start School Later Maryland and also for Anne Arundel County. Start School Later is a national nonprofit, based here in Maryland, working in 20 states with over 75 chapters, to raise awareness and assist communities working towards healthy and safe school hours. Baltimore, Howard, and Montgomery Counties also have Start School Later chapters.

I am sure that you are aware that the American Academy of Pediatrics, U.S. Centers for Disease Control, and just this month, the American Medical Association, all recommend that middle and high schools start no earlier than 8:30 a.m. The 2014 joint study between MSDE and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene recommended that no school start before 8 a.m.

The joint report also noted: "The consequences of changing school start times are unavoidable, but they can be ameliorated with proper planning and preparation. Any consideration of a statewide mandate for a later school start time must consider the unique needs of each of the 24 local jurisdictions. However, in preserving the status quo where by school start times are a matter for each local jurisdiction, the state risks letting local resistance trump a strong body of scientific evidence that sleep is critical to health and academic achievement."

Maryland does have high schools that start at or after 8:30, including in Baltimore City, and Charles, Prince George's, Garrett, and Washington Counties. There are a few more school systems with Middle School starting after 8:30, including Baltimore City, and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Charles, Garrett, Kent, Prince George's, Washington, and Wicomico Counties. For Elementary Schools, even more counties meet the 8 am recommendation, but six do not, with elementary school starting as early as 7:30 in two of them. Healthy and Safe School Hours do exist in pockets in Maryland, but there is still much to do.

The challenge remains with changing those counties that start in the 7 o'clock hour, listed as red times on the attachment to my testimony. Inherent community resistance to change and institutional inertia are difficult to overcome, but not impossible, as demonstrated by communities across the U.S. from Maine to Seattle and also in the National Capital Region. These school systems changed their school hours for the well documented academic, physical and mental health benefits for the adolescent

students. I have submitted to you, a flyer we created in Anne Arundel County, listing the many benefits of healthier school hours.

To that end, the General Assembly passed the Orange Ribbon Bill in March, which will go into effect next month. The Bill offers tiered recognition for school system that already have healthy hours like Garrett County, and those in the process of moving towards them like Montgomery, Howard, and Anne Arundel Counties.

Maryland was the first state in the nation in 2014 to study this issue, recently followed by New Jersey and proposed Pennsylvania legislation. We again led the nation with the Orange Ribbon Bill recognition program. Perhaps school systems could use the savings from Senate Bill 520- Motor Tax Exemption for school buses to help fund implementing safer and healthier school hours.

Healthy school hours are a public health issue, uniquely governed by educational policies. I hope that the Maryland Board of Education will strongly encourage MSDE to successfully implement the Orange Ribbon Bill and help school systems voluntarily move to healthier and safer school hours. And I hope that future Superintendents of the Year consideration will include those Superintendents who have successfully led change in their county to healthier and safer school hours for all ages.

Thank you and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Lisa VanBuskirk

Chapter Leader Start School Later Maryland and Anne Arundel County

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Encl: (1) 9 Ways Later Middle and High School Start Times Benefit Teens And The Community

(2) 2015-2016 Maryland Public School Hours

9 Ways Later MIDDLE and HIGH SCHOOL Start Times Benefit Teens and the Community

1. Healthy School Hours Reduce the Achievement Gap

"[D]elaying school start times by one hour, from roughly 7:30 to 8:30, increases standardized test scores by at least 2 percentile points in math and 1 percentile point in reading. The effect is largest for students with below-average test scores, suggesting that later start times would narrow gaps in student achievement."

2. Healthy School Hours Lower Juvenile Crime Rates

Juvenile Crime peaks nationwide at 3 p.m., a time that's between the end of school and when parents get home. Police support limiting unsupervised situations at this crucial time. Also, sleep deprived teens are more likely to commit crime due to low self-control.

3. Healthy School Hours Help Prevent Car Crashes

Drowsy driving is responsible for a significant number of fatal teen crashes. School districts with later morning start times see the teen crash rates decline.

4. Healthy School Hours Reduce Drop-Out Rates

School attendance improves, tardiness decreases and graduation rates increase, which helps raise tax revenues and reduce crime and gang activity.

5. Healthy School Hours Improve Health

Sleep loss has wide-ranging consequences, including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and hypertension. Sleep deprivation reduces the immune system. With later, healthier school start times, teens experience fewer sports injuries and miss fewer days of school due to illness.

6. Healthy School Hours Are Better for Mental Health

Inadequate sleep is linked to depressed mood, anxiety, behavioral problems, alcohol and drug use, risky behaviors and suicidal thoughts.

The Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2013 (YRBS) shows that 16.9% of Anne Arundel County high school students seriously considered suicide and 13% made a plan to do so. The county's numbers are slightly higher than the Maryland average. When able to sleep more:

- Teen attitudes and behavior improve
- Teens report less depression
- Teenage needs for medication decreases

(A cost-benefit analysis prepared for Fairfax County, Virginia, estimates that later start times could save the community \$1.7 million a year in mental health treatment costs.)

7. Healthy School Hours Help Prevent Substance Abuse

Increased and adequate sleep decreases risk taking behaviors such alcohol and drug use. The Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2013 shows that Anne Arundel County high school students have higher rates of substance abuse than the Maryland average across nearly all categories queried.

8. Healthy School Hours Make Streets Safer

With early school start times, many students who are eligible for school bus service opt out and instead drive to school (or are driven by family members), which leads to more cars on the road during morning rush hours. In addition, children walking to schools and bus stops in the predawn darkness are a serious safety risk for both pedestrians and drivers.

9. Healthy School Hours Are Family-Friendly

A year after the city of Minneapolis implemented later start times, students were getting an hour more of sleep per school night, 92 percent of parents were happy with the change, and parents reported improved relationships with their children.



SOURCES: (1) <http://educationnext.org/do-schools-begin-too-early/> and http://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/legacy/files/downloads_and_links/092011_organize_jacob_rockoff_brief.pdf
(2) www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24085558
(3) www.geico.com/information/autosafety/safety-library/ and <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2603528/pdf/jcsm.4.6.533.pdf>
(4) http://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/legacy/files/downloads_and_links/092011_organize_jacob_rockoff_brief.pdf
(5) http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6430a1.htm?_cid=mm6430a1_e and <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25028798>
(6) <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2656315/> Bernert RA, Joiner TE. Sleep disturbances and suicide risk: A review of the literature. *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment*. 2007;3(6):735-743 and <https://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/app/Results.aspx?LID=MD>
(7) <https://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/app/Results.aspx?LID=MD>
(8) <http://startschoollater.pbworks.com/w/page/60412558/Sleep%20Loss%20and%20Accidents%20or%20Injury>
(9) <http://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/162769/Impact%20of%20Later%20Start%20Time%20Final%20Report.pdf?sequence=1.pdf>



2015-2016 Maryland Public School Hours

Red-Anything before American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation (8:30) for High School/Middle School and anything before DHMH recommendation (8:00) for Elementary School.

Green-Anything after AAP recommendation (8:30) for High School/Middle School and anything after DHMH recommendation (8:00) for Elementary School.

Maryland County	HS Start Time	MS Start Time	ES Start Time	Potential Orange Bill Recognition
Alleghany County	7:40	7:40	8:00-8:45	
Anne Arundel County	7:17	7:55-9:10	8:00-9:20	Yes-Start Time Committee and tentative plan to change hours
Baltimore City	7:45-9:00	7:45-9:00	7:45-9:00	
Baltimore County	7:10-7:45	7:40-8:30	8:35-9:20	
Calvert County	7:25-7:40	7:22-8:25	8:30	
Caroline County	7:50	7:40	9:00	
Carroll County	7:30	8:25-8:35	7:45-9:30	
Cecil County	7:40	7:50-8:10	9:00	
Charles County	7:25-9:05	7:45-8:50	8:30-9:30	
Dorchester County	7:50-8:15	7:55-8:05	8:30-9:00	
Frederick County	7:30	8:00	8:20-9:00	

Maryland County	HS Start Time	MS Start Time	ES Start Time	Potential Orange Bill Recognition
Garrett County	8:25*	8:30	8:15-8:40	Yes-Healthy school hours
Harford County	7:30	8:15	9-9:30	
Howard County	7:25	7:40-8:25	8:35-9:25	Yes-Start Time Committee and tentative plan to change hours
Kent County	7:45	8:40	8:00-9:00	
Montgomery County	7:45	7:55-8:15	9:00-9:25	Yes-Made a change to school hours
Prince George's County	7:45-9:30	7:45-9:30	7:45-9:15	
Queen Anne's County	7:35	7:45	7:30-8:55	
Somerset County	7:30	7:20	8:00	
St Mary's County	8:00	7:20-8	8:25-9:00	
Talbot County	7:45-7:50	7:45-7:50	8:40	
Washington County	8:45	7:20-8:45	7:30-9:15	
Wicomico County	7:45	7:45-9:15	8:15-9:15	
Worcester County	7:48-8:07	7:30-8:00	7:45-8:30	

June 28, 2016

To: Maryland State Board Of Education

From L. Michelle Johnson, consultmj@gmail.com, 410-810-7439

RE: Queen Anne's County Public Schools

I never fully understood the role and power of local school boards until now. I am here to share that I am taking my concern to the legislature. We must have a process in place to ensure that local school boards are making decisions based on data and a shared vision that is based on the Comprehensive Master Plan of the system.

I don't want what happened in Queen Anne's County to happen in any other jurisdiction. The rules surrounding the selection, appointment, and evaluation of superintendents are too vague. So vague, that three board members have been allowed to come in office and not share the vision or direction that they would like to take with the Superintendent and Board of Education staff. So vague, that they are allowed to ABRUPTLY remove a superintendent without annual review in retaliation for past personnel decisions and the past decision to move two fifth grade classes to the middle school. I am not against change. The process can be renewing to a system. But when it is done haphazardly and without direction and a shared vision, it demonstrates the incompetence and willful neglect of those in power. To tear the system down by going through two leadership changes is not in the best interest of student achievement.

I understand decisions fueled by politics and the electoral process, but even local boards that set the vision and direction to make decisions that weaken unions and strengthen charters make decisions based on a vision that includes student achievement. Everyone may not agree with that vision but it is directional.

We NEED structures in place that allow for the cogent discussion that accompanies taking a political side, but those structures need to make it impossible for individuals to use power to humiliate and retaliate and that is how power is being used in Queen Anne's County. One simple solution would be to make the formal annual review of superintendents mandatory. The review can include standard measures, but it can also include measures that are specific to the jurisdiction and its political leanings.

I respect the process and believe in the autonomy of the local jurisdiction, but local board members needs rules regarding making decisions to support student achievement and this board needs greater authority to ensure that they do so.

My name is Barbara Donick. I am a member of Right to Read-Maryland, a coalition of educators and organizations who have the common goal of improving teacher preparation as it specifically relates to reading skills acquisition for all. In Maryland, both the NAEP and the PARCC testing results showed that approximately 60% of our 4th graders are not proficient in reading.

I am addressing this board because the Maryland State Board of Education along with the Professional Standards Teacher's Board controls through regulations the certification and preparation of Maryland's teachers. Last year we introduced House Bill 763 Task Force to Study Effectiveness of Teacher Education Programs in the Instruction of Reading. When this bill reached the Ways and Means Committee in the House of Delegates, MSDE opposed it because they were planning to create a work group to study and revise the four reading courses required for teachers This work group is now in progress.. These four courses were designed in 2004 with the assistance of Dr. Louisa Moats a national expert who has been involved in the field of reading research, clinical practice, classroom teaching, and teacher training for over four decades.

We want to ensure that this work group leads to the improvement of reading instruction based on sound policies. Dr. Moats has provided a road map to "ensure that anyone bent on finding programs that truly work can do so with confidence."* The following are some of her suggestions.

1. Teachers licensed for elementary school should be required to complete a course of study in reading research, including scientific findings about how children learn to read, why some children fail to learn to read, and what instructional methods have been validated.

2. All teachers of reading and related language skills should be given ready access to models of effective teaching.

3. Continuing education for the teachers of teachers, certified by a respected and independent body, will be needed before colleges of education will change.

4. Teacher testing must be calibrated to measure knowledge of scientifically-based research and disciplinary knowledge base required for effective instruction. The majority of today's teacher licensing tests are irrelevant for predicting teacher competence and do not have content consistent with scientific based reading research (SBRR).

5. School boards must support the necessary conditions for instructional improvement in reading including professional development time and leadership training for principals among others.

The four reading courses are currently required to align with College and Career Reading Standards, and the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). Unfortunately, CAEP bases their reading requirements on the International Literacy Association (ILA) standards which do not follow SBRR. We would like to recommend that the state examine the Center for Effective Reading Instruction (CERI), a subsidiary of the International Dyslexia Association. This organization is reviewing and accrediting university programs for their alignment with scientific reading research.

The development of reading skills serves as the major foundational academic ability for all school based learning. We appreciate your time and attention to this critical issue.

*www.edexcellencemedia.net/publications/2007/...wholelanguagehighjinks/Moats