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To: Daniel Volchok, Chairperson
Teresa Buono, Vice Chairperson
Masconomet Regional School Committee
From: Middleton Board of Health
Date: March 15, 2017
Re: School Start Time

Dear Mrs. Buono and members of the Tri-Town School Committee,

At the Middleton Board of Health meeting held on February 1, 2017, the board discussed the start time for Middle and High School students and assessed the need to support a change in start time to no earlier than 8:30am. It was the decision of the Middleton Board of Health to recommend and support the timeframe of no earlier than 8:30am for Middle and High School students.

The decision to support and recommend the change in start time is based on extensive clinical data and studies and the fact that: Adolescents today face a widespread chronic health problem; sleep deprivation. Although society often views sleep as a luxury that ambitious or active people cannot afford, research shows that getting enough sleep is a biological necessity, as important to good health as eating well or exercising. [Teens](#)¹ are among those “least” likely to get enough sleep; while they need on average 9 1/4 hours of sleep per night for optimal performance, health and brain development. Teens average fewer than 7 hours per school night by the end of high school, and most report feeling tired during the day ([Wolfson & Carskadon, 1998](#)²). The roots of the problem include poor teen sleep habits that do not allow for enough hours of quality sleep, hectic schedules with afterschool activities and jobs, homework hours and family obligations. In addition to a clash between societal demands, such as early [school start times](#)³ and biological changes that put most teens on a later sleep-wake clock. As a result, when it is time to wake up for school, the adolescent’s body says it is still the middle of the night, and he or she has had too little sleep to feel rested and alert.

The consequences of sleep deprivation during the teenage years are particularly serious. Teens spend a great portion of each day in school; however, they are unable to maximize the learning opportunities afforded by the education system, since sleep deprivation impairs their ability to be alert, pay attention, solve problems, cope with stress and retain information. Young people who do not get enough sleep night after night carry a significant risk for [drowsy driving](#)⁴; emotional and behavioral problems such as irritability, [depression](#)⁵, poor impulse control and

violence; health complaints; tobacco and alcohol use; impaired cognitive function and decision-making; and lower overall performance in everything from academics to athletics.

A post⁶ on the American Academy of Pediatrics website quotes Pediatrician Judith Owens, lead author of the new policy statement as saying:

“Chronic sleep loss in children and adolescents is one of the most common – and easily fixable – public health issues in the U.S. today. The research is clear that adolescents who get enough sleep have a reduced risk of being overweight or suffering depression, are less likely to be involved in automobile accidents, and have better grades, higher standardized test scores and an overall better quality of life. Studies have shown that delaying early school start times is one key factor that can help adolescents get the sleep they need to grow and learn.”

The Middleton Board of Health supports the [10 Essential Public Health Services](#)⁷ for our community, in particular for this topic, the public health services of building community partnerships and actions to identify and solve health problems and assessing new insights and innovative solutions to health problems. Respectively, the Middleton BOH is more than willing to take a role supporting and promoting this change and willing to work with all involved in safe guarding the health of our children.

On behalf of the Middleton Board of Health,



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Cc. Middleton Board of Health
Dr. Kevin Lyons, Superintendent of Masconomet Regional School District
Dr. Scott Morrisson, Superintendent of The Tri Town School Union
Traci Mello,RN; Middleton Public Health Nurse

1,2,3,5 National Sleep Foundation 2017
4 DrowsyDriving.Org/National Sleep Foundation 2017
6 School Start Times for Adolescents, American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement 2014
7 Centers for Disease Control, 10 Essential Public Health Services