

Senate Education Committee

Ryan Meleedy 271-4151

HB 184, establishing a committee to study changing school start times.

Hearing Date: March 25, 2025

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Ward, Sullivan, Abbas, Prentiss and Altschiller

Members of the Committee Absent : None

Bill Analysis: This bill establishes a committee to study changing school start times.

Sponsors:
Rep. Wheeler

Who supports the bill: Representative Jonah Wheeler, Matthew Stern, Alecia Magnifico, Sayre Moskwa, Deidre McEachern.

Who opposes the bill: Senator Debra Altschiller, Penny Culliton, Katie McLaughlin.

Who is neutral on the bill: Marissa Thibeau.

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Representative Wheeler

- Representative Wheeler introduced House Bill 184.
- He explained that the genesis of the bill came from his constituents who feel their local school board has disregarded their concerns over the school start times.
- Representative Wheeler expressed that the proposed study committee would assess what the implementation of a change in policy would look like at the local and state levels.
- Representative Wheeler shared that he learned some school districts have already started to change their school start times through the House hearing of this bill. He also stated that this study committee would be tasked with addressing the health concerns associated with early school start times. He firmly believed that establishing a study committee, rather than passing a

mandate, would allow the issue of busing to be addressed more thoughtfully by encouraging input from stakeholders.

- Senator Sullivan asked Representative Wheeler what grade level the children of the parents who approached him were. Representative Wheeler replied that the information can be found in the House Education Policy and Administration Committee hearing on January 15th at 3:00 PM. He expressed that in that hearing, students came and testified on HB 184 and appeared to be upper elementary or lower middle school aged.
- Senator Prentiss expressed that she has heard similar concerns from high school students and asked if Representative Wheeler was envisioning the consideration of a range of start times and if the school districts would have the ability to adopt from those ranges or a single start time for every district in the state. Representative Wheeler responded that the study committee would be considering the complexities of changing school start times, such as the potential effect on school athletics. The study committee would, in theory, produce a range of recommendations for local school districts to consider.
- Senator Abbas expressed that a consequence of changing the start time is likely that the end time of school may have to be changed and asked if the Representative would be open to an amendment encompassing school end times as well.
- Representative Wheeler said that House Bill 184 is the committee's bill and supports what the committee feels is best. He continued that the bill does not set forth any specific policy proposals on school start or end times, but if the committee did forward recommendations for such changes, he would be supportive of including end times.
- Senator Altschiller asked Representative Wheeler what his school board had done to address this issue at the local level because other localities have addressed this issue, emphasizing that this issue falls under the local school board's jurisdiction. Representative Wheeler explained that the school board was dismissive of the parents' and students' concerns, so the parents brought their concerns to him. He said that the study committee may be able to establish a way for the state to help school districts move forward with changing their start times or that there may be a statewide solution.
- Senator Ward asked Representative Wheeler if he had looked at the report that was produced a few years ago regarding a very similar issue.
- Representative Wheeler replied that he had read the report and that it was not as comprehensive in nature as House Bill 184's proposed study committee would be.
- Senator Ward established that bus transportation for students in rural areas can take a significant portion of the child's morning. Representative Wheeler

agreed that bussing is an issue that needs to be considered but didn't believe the issue of bussing should outweigh the health of students, and the legislature should be the body determining what is best for the health of New Hampshire students.

- Senator Prentiss reiterated that bussing drives how many of these decisions are made and urged that the study committee produce a range of recommendations for communities to consider.