



Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators

Written Testimony to the

House Intergovernmental Affairs & Operations Committee

Daylight Savings Time – Impact on PA Schools

April 2026

Dr. Sherri Smith, Executive Director, PASA

Chairman Dellosso, Chairman Staats, and members of the House Intergovernmental Affairs and Operations Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the impact of daylight saving time on Pennsylvania's schools and students. My name is Dr. Sherri Smith, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA). PASA serves nearly 1,100 school leaders across the Commonwealth including more than 600 sitting school superintendents, assistant superintendents and executive directors.

Upon gathering feedback from members of the PASA Legislative Committee (school leaders from each region of the state) their response was primarily focused on the safety concerns of our students – particularly in the morning commute to school.

Safety Concern: Morning Bus Pickups

The most pressing concern for Pennsylvania school districts involves the timing of sunrise in relation to morning bus pickups.

If Pennsylvania adopts year-round Daylight Saving Time (DST), the sun would not rise until approximately 8:40 AM (see chart below) in many parts of the state during the winter months.

- **Visibility:** Students would be standing at rural and suburban bus stops or walking to school in total darkness during the highest-traffic morning hours.
- **Driver Fatigue and Awareness:** Drivers are often less alert in the dark, significantly increasing the risk of accidents involving children crossing streets or waiting on shoulders. This includes high school drivers who are not only inexperienced but driving sometimes in less-than-optimal conditions.
- **Extreme Cold:** The coldest part of the day typically occurs just before dawn. Under permanent DST, students would wait outside during these peak low temperatures,

increasing the risk of frostbite and cold-related illnesses. Additionally, this has the potential of increasing the number of days schools feel they must delay the start of classes due to the extreme cold. In many cases, these are our youngest students waiting in extreme cold and in the dark.

Comparison of Sunrise Effects in Pennsylvania (Mid-Winter)

Time System	Approx. Sunrise (Pittsburgh)	Approx. Sunrise (Philadelphia)	Impact on Commute
Current (Standard)	7:40 AM	7:22 AM	Some light during late pickups.
Permanent DST	8:40 AM	8:22 AM	Commute in total darkness.

Data Source: Astronomical solar noon and sunrise tables for Pennsylvania (2025-2026).

The Current System Provides a Balanced Approach

The existing system of seasonal time adjustment reflects a practical and effective balance between competing needs.

- **Standard Time (Winter Months):**
Supports morning visibility and safer transportation conditions for students and staff.
- **Daylight Saving Time (Spring–Fall Months):**
Extends daylight into the evening hours, benefiting:
 - After-school programs
 - Interscholastic athletics
 - Extracurricular and community activities

This structure aligns with the school calendar, student schedules, and the broader community use of school facilities. It enables districts to maximize both safety during the winter months and student engagement during the spring, summer, and fall.

That said, several of our members noted that year-round standard time could help address concerns related to student fatigue, truancy, and discipline immediately following the shift to daylight saving time. However, concerns about student safety, particularly during the morning commute, outweigh the relatively brief adjustment period some students experience after the time change.

Operational and Educational Implications

The adoption of permanent daylight saving time would introduce significant operational challenges for school districts, including:

- Increased transportation safety concerns
- Misalignment between daylight hours and school start times
- Potential disruption to established schedules for instruction, athletics, and extracurricular programming

Additional impacts include exacerbating existing bus driver shortages due to more hazardous driving conditions, increasing heating and operational costs for earlier building use in darkness, and negatively affecting student academic readiness. Research indicates that student alertness is closely tied to circadian rhythms, and beginning the day in darkness may contribute to “social jetlag,” reducing focus and overall well-being.

Furthermore, while permanent Standard Time offers improved morning light, it may create inconsistencies with neighboring states, complicating interstate coordination for athletics, transportation, and extracurricular activities.

Conclusion and Recommendation

While the intent behind proposals to adopt permanent daylight saving time or permanent standard time is to create consistency, each approach carries meaningful consequences for student safety, school operations, and educational outcomes.

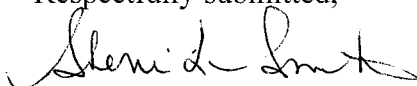
The current system provides a thoughtful and functional balance that aligns with both safety considerations and the operational realities of school districts.

Therefore, PASA respectfully urges the legislature to maintain the current system of seasonal time observance. If intent on a change, we ask that a comprehensive safety impact study focused specifically on Pennsylvania’s student population is completed before moving forward with any permanent change.

The safety of our children standing or walking on a dark, freezing roadside in January must outweigh the desire for an additional hour of evening daylight in July.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We welcome continued dialogue and partnership on this important issue.

Respectfully submitted,



Sherri L. Smith, Ed.D.
Executive Director