

3/26/25

Chair Neron, Vice Chairs Dobson and McIntire, members of the committee,

For the record my name is Willis Homann, I am a Government Relations Specialist for the Oregon School Employees Association. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2251 -3. OSEA represents over 25,000 classified educators who transport students, support them in classrooms, provide meals, and maintain clean and safe facilities - among countless other responsibilities. Our jobs are varied but our mission is focused: to provide the best possible support in the education of our students.

While OSEA does not have an official stance on HB 2251, the impact this policy will have on our students, staff and communities is not to be understated. It is well-researched and documented that cell-phone use in our classrooms is not beneficial to students. It leads to higher rates of distraction, cyber-bullying and feelings of isolation and depression among our youth. With the exception of students who need their phone for their health, or as a part of their IEP or 504 plan - we know the distraction phones create takes students out of the learning environment and puts educators in a situation where they have to spend their days constantly making sure the students are putting their phones away.

Students are also not the only victims of cyberbullying in schools. Many classified educators have been recorded when they didn't know it - these recordings can lead to educators being doxed and bullied online, and in some extreme cases have affected their employment. The positions our classified educators work are hard, stressful and often some of the lowest paid. These positions are hard to recruit and retain for, and the introduction of smartphones and cyberbullying has only made it harder to keep people in these jobs.

Although the intention of this bill is not to increase the workload of our educators, every district being able to make their own plan will lead to more work for educators in certain districts. Currently, many districts around the state have their own plans for cellphone use in schools. In some districts, the onus of enforcement has been placed on teachers, in some administrators and in some classified. The flexibility for districts does allow them to create their own policies that work within their local communities, but the lack of clarity on enforcement does mean in some districts the onus of implementing and enforcing this bill will fall on the backs of educators. As this bill moves forward, it is important to remember the impact it will have on the education workforce, and how clarity from the state may help mitigate those concerns.

As this bill is considered, we would urge consideration into the effects on the educator workforce and who will be responsible for implementation and enforcement as this policy makes it's way to our schools.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.



Oregon School Employees Association

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Sincerely,

Willis Homann

OSEA Government Relations Specialist

The Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the AFL-CIO.

