

Testimony in Support of HB2251

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Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of House Bill 2251, which would ban smartphones in public schools for the entire duration of the school day.

As a parent, public educator, and concerned community member, I am deeply grateful that this legislation is being considered. Our children deserve to learn in environments that are free from unnecessary distractions and digital temptations that impair both focus and emotional well-being. Smartphones in schools have become one of the most significant barriers to meaningful learning and in-person engagement among students.

When concerned parents in our local school district raised this issue and asked for policy changes to reduce or eliminate smartphone use during school hours, the district acknowledged the concern, but declined to act, citing the need for clear direction from ODE and the State. This underscores the need for statewide legislation. School districts are looking you for guidance—and without that guidance, many are hesitant or unwilling to act, even when the evidence and parental feedback support change.

HB2251 provides the leadership schools need, and the support families are begging for, to bring back distraction-free, safe, and healthy learning environments. The research is clear: the most effective policies are bell-to-bell bans, with no personal smartphone access during the school day. Loopholes and partial restrictions undermine the goals of such policies and make enforcement more difficult for educators.

I urge you not to water this bill down. Anything less than a full ban risks maintaining the status quo—where our students are constantly pulled away from instruction, peer relationships, and even their own mental well-being.

Please support HB2251 as it was originally written and give our schools the direction and tools they need to focus on what matters most: educating Oregon's children.

Thank you for your time and your leadership on this critical issue.

In Partnership, Lindsey Voorhees, M.Ed