

Submitter:

Michelle Monroe

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB2251

As an Oregon resident, school shooting survivor, and the mother of children in public school, I am writing to say that I oppose HB2251.

While I understand that phones in schools can be a distraction, I also think that in today's environment, it's extremely important for parents to be able to contact and track their kids. I am a school shooting survivor and was one of the only teens in my class who had a cell phone (this was 20 years ago). We were able to use my cell phone to call our parents and let them know that we were safe. As we unfortunately know, school shootings and violence have only increased in the last 20 years. The idea that the same thing could happen to my kids and I wouldn't be able to contact them or track their location is terrifying.

I am also the mother to a 9 year old autistic son who attends a Bend-La Pine elementary school. He doesn't have a cell phone, but he does wear an Apple Watch to school everyday. He's expressed the desire to elope from school in the past when he's had autistic meltdowns, so it gives me peace of mind knowing I can track his whereabouts and he can call me if it happens. His watch is set to "school mode" during school hours, which means he can only make emergency calls and texts to myself or 911. As far as I know, all Apple products and most other brands of phones have this option for parents.

I don't agree with a blanket state law against devices in schools. I also don't agree with the idea of allowing use only for certain students (such as kids on an IEP/504), because that singles them out amongst their peers. I think a realistic solution is for schools to ask that parents put "school mode" restrictions on their kids devices, and for teachers and administrators to continue to enforce rules and boundaries around phone use in schools. For instance, if the teacher sees you using it during class, it's taken away for the day, like any other distracting item.

I urge you to reject this bill as I believe it will compromise our children's safety.

Thank you,

Michelle Monroe
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