

Submitter:

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On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB2251

Dear Senate Committee on Education,

I hope this letter finds you well. As an educator with ten years of experience, including six years in public schools and four in private education, I have observed firsthand the impact that cell phone policies have on middle school students. I am writing to urge you to advocate for policies that prohibit the use of cell phones during school hours in all schools.

Cell phones, while undoubtedly powerful tools for people of all ages, present significant challenges to the educational environment. My experiences in both public and private school settings over the last decade have underscored the importance of minimizing distractions to maximize learning. Please allow me to illustrate this with a few scenarios based on my observations and expertise.

In my public school classroom where cell phones were permitted, a student would often glance at his phone during class, claiming to check the time. However, it became evident that he was responding to text messages and engaging in social media platforms like Snapchat and Instagram. Despite my efforts to redirect his focus, his academic performance suffered due to his divided attention; his brain simply was not developed enough to multitask. Because of a lack of oversight at a higher level, there was nothing in my power to dissuade his use of the phone in my classroom. The extent of my influence was to take the phone and place it on my desk until the end of class. In contrast, in my private school classroom where cell phones are not allowed, students like this are more engaged in discussions and collaborative activities, resulting in improved comprehension and stronger academic outcomes. It's not that they wouldn't rather be scrolling their feed, they simply do not have the opportunity to do so.

In public school, a female student of mine experienced cyberbullying through group chats created during school hours. The emotional toll on this student was evident, and it disrupted her ability to focus in class. She was in the midst of peers that clearly had negative things to say about her, and she was reading those comments in real time while also trying to learn important content. In my current private school, where cell phones are not accessible during the day, the likelihood of such incidents occurring is greatly reduced, fostering a safer and more inclusive environment for all students. The morale on campus is palpably different on these two campuses.

Beyond these scenarios, research consistently highlights the negative impact of cell phone use on student focus, mental health, and social development. Middle and high school students, in particular, are at a critical stage in developing the self-discipline and interpersonal skills they will need for future success. The learning they

encounter in grades 6-12 is vital for their future success in the world. Learning to think critically, ask good questions, engage in historical learning about our country's foundation, and encountering mathematical concepts that will support all future endeavors are all being somewhat skimmed due to the accessibility of cell phones in the classroom. By removing cell phones from the equation, we can provide all students with a more structured, focused, and supportive environment.

This is all to say nothing of the specific struggles of English Language Learners or students with learning disabilities. If we are to educate students from all backgrounds and learning styles, the need for distraction free classrooms is of the utmost importance.

I urge you to consider the benefits of restricting cell phone use in middle and high schools and to support legislation or policies that prioritize students' educational and emotional well-being over digital convenience. Together, we can create learning spaces where students thrive without unnecessary distractions and truly support our nation's future.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.