



Oregon Pediatric Society

A Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Incorporated in Oregon

DATE: May 9, 2025

TO: Chair Frederick, Vice-Chair Weber,
and members of the Oregon Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Julie Scholz, Executive Director
On behalf of the Oregon Pediatric Society (OPS) board of directors

SUBJECT: Support for House Bill 2251-A

My name is Julie Scholz, and I am writing to express the Oregon Pediatric Society's support of HB 2251, a tough love intervention that aids youth mental health and student learning, supports school teachers and classroom management, while fighting one of the most pervasive compulsive behaviors in our modern society: attachment to mobile phones and their content.

Studies show a precipitous decline in adolescent mental health, especially for girls, around the time that Smartphones became more pervasive with consumers of all ages. This product's market penetration allowed young people greater mobile access to looking at social media—and being entertained, judged, cyberbullied or extorted—throughout the day and night. In 2009, only about half of teens used social media every day. In 2017, 85% used it daily. In 2023, 22% of 10th grade girls spent seven or more hours a day on social media. Research linking social media use to youth anxiety and depression led the U.S. Surgeon General to issue a 2023 advisory warning of potential harms to child and adolescent well-being. Oregon is listed by Mental Health America as having one of the worst youth mental health rankings in the country.

Teachers and studies are clear that having phones create distractions and disruptions in the classroom. Twenty other states have enacted statewide policies on cellphones in schools. This bill supports local control by school districts in developing their methodologies for implementation and security policies. American Academy of Pediatrics experts recommend that phone policies take into account the views of multiple impacted groups, including caregivers/parents, students, teachers, school mental health providers, school nurses and other school health staff, and school administrators. That includes putting in place resources in classrooms in case there is a school or community emergency.

OPS's pediatrician members and board directors spent a significant amount of time discussing the merits and potential nuances and complexities of this "bell-to-bell" bill. We talked about how school access to cell phones during non-instructional time might also encourage some students to attend school. Cell phone school policies are only one piece of the puzzle. Outside of legislation, pediatricians would like to find ways for



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parents, schools, and communities to engage in greater digital literacy education, guiding young people to more safely and responsibly connect with social media and use mobile communications.

OPS supports HB 2251A because Oregon's diverse school phone culture isn't working,. The genie might be out of the bottle, but sometimes what kids (and adults and institutions) need most are boundaries and accountability. Let's give this approach a chance to improving Oregon student academic outcomes and behavioral health.

Thank you for your consideration.