

Submitter:

Matthew Fox

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB2251

Representative Wallan, Senator Reynolds, Representative Dobson, members of the committee, my name is Matt Fox I am a High School Teacher from Bend Oregon and I am writing to share my opposition to HB 2251. You may wonder what a High School teacher would be doing opposing a measure such as this. I want to be clear that there is a problem with cell phones in schools, that is for sure. My opposition to this bill is less around a disagreement that cell phones are an issue and more about what the solution should be. We need to give students tools, education, and ways to manage and learn how to use cell phones appropriately not simply take them away. We know from so many examples, that simply taking something away and outright banning it does not work. This approach also ignores the reality of what students will experience in a few short years or less when they enter the workforce, college, or whatever their next step will be.

I am also dismayed and frustrated that there has been a significant lack of student voice involved in this bill. I have watched groups in my hometown of Bend share their concerns again and again without talking to the students this will most effect. These groups are certainly loud and vocal, and I appreciate their concern, but they are not made up of teachers and students who deal with the realities of this daily issue and better understand the nuances. When we make laws that primarily effect students without thoughtfully involving them we are not only sending a message to future constituents, but also diminishing their voice, their agency, and the knowledge they possess.

We don't have the training, funding, or plans in place to help students through a transition like this. If we believe this bill comes with no cost we are sorely mistaken. This will end up as another unfunded mandate that undercuts our education funding. If we are going to help students we will put things in place to help them socialize (I am thinking of spaces, support, sports equipment, infrastructure, and time to help them relearn how to socialize, interact, play, and be kids again). I am not saying there aren't real consequences of the phones in school, what I am saying is that we are putting the cart before the horse and will do real damage for students and schools.

What will students do if this passes. One answer is they will leave campus more often, we will make schools a place they don't want to be, make them feel unwelcome, and make school a place they feel like they are policed. We will most certainly create tardy and attendance issues that again will become an unfunded ask and require more of school without adequately resourcing them.

I urge you to consider opposing this bill so that we may take the time to craft something meaningful with students, teachers, parents, communities, and other stakeholders that doesn't ignore the reality these students face and better prepares them for their future while supporting schools.

Thank you for your consideration.