

Submitter: Andrew Harvey
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2251
Written Testimony in Support of HB 2251
Submitted by a Portland Parent

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of HB 2251. As a parent of a 16-year-old sophomore at Franklin High School in Portland, I've seen firsthand how smartphone overuse is deeply affecting our children's mental health, learning, and development.

My daughter struggles with anxiety, difficulty focusing in class, and challenges with face-to-face communication. Like many teens, she's growing up in a world where most interaction happens through screens, and she's missing out on learning how to have real conversations. She hasn't developed the confidence or communication skills that should come naturally during adolescence because her social life is mediated almost entirely by her phone.

Franklin technically has a no-phone policy, but it is poorly enforced. Phones are visible and in use throughout the day — in classrooms, during passing periods, and especially at lunch. Even if not actively used, their presence is a major distraction. Research shows that a phone can reduce focus just by being in the room — even when turned off.

Apps are engineered to be addictive and to constantly pull for attention. Phones don't just interrupt learning — they undermine it. They limit our kids' ability to think deeply, retain information, and stay present. They also play a central role in bullying, which increasingly happens in digital spaces where adults can't intervene. And while phones offer access to information, the content kids are exposed to is often algorithm-driven and curated in a way that narrows their world instead of expanding it.

We've tried to set boundaries at home, but it's incredibly difficult to make progress when the school environment doesn't support those limits. A phone-free school day would give my daughter — and so many others — the chance to reset, focus, and develop real-world social and academic skills.

Though I'm too ill to testify live, I felt it was important to share my voice. I urge you to support HB 2251. Our students need clear boundaries around phone use — not just policies on paper, but legislation that empowers schools to create focused, healthy

learning environments.

Sincerely,
Andrew Harvey
Parent, Portland, OR