

Submitter: Brooke Mues
On Behalf Of: 1000 Parents in Central Oregon
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2251

Dear Chair Frederick and Members of the Committee:

My name is Brooke Mues. I own and operate a small business in Portland, OR and live and raise my two children in Bend, OR. In the fall of 2024, I co-founded Well Wired, a healthy tech advocacy group in Central Oregon. I support HB 2251.

In the past year and half of advocating for healthy tech in Bend and Central Oregon, which has included spending hundreds of hours speaking with parents, teachers, administrators, mental health providers, and members of the community, I have learned the following:

(1) There is incredible demand for parent education related to addictive technology and kids' tech use as demonstrated by the 1500+ people who have registered for our Well Wired healthy tech talks and film screenings. The data and research is readily available and parents are seeking it out. For instance, according to Pew Research Center, more than a third of teens ages 13-17 say they use social media "almost constantly", including during the school day. Parents and kids need support with addictive tech, and the passage of HB 2251 will do just that.

(2) Parents are choosing to delay giving smartphones and social media to their kids until 16 years old or later, per the advice of the former US Surgeon General and experts who study the harms of addictive technology on kids. In fact, over 600 kids (and counting) have signed our Well Wired Healthy Tech Pledge to delay smartphones and social media until high school in Central Oregon. Please heed this same expert advice and pass HB 2251, which will validate parents' choice to delay addictive tech and help grow the collective action.

(3) Parents want schools to provide a classroom and school environment that is free of distractions caused by phones and personal electronic devices as demonstrated by 93% of the 1000+ parents we surveyed in Bend who are in support of phone-free schools.

(4) Teachers, school administrators, and school districts want and need the support of the state to get phones out of schools. After a year and half of Well Wired advocacy work, including presentations to the Bend-La Pine School District and leveraging the support of many active parents who have emailed concerns to their teachers, administrators, and district leaders, showed up at school board meetings, and participated in work groups – even after 135+ mental health experts and

pediatric providers in Central Oregon signed and submitted a letter of concern to the Bend-La Pine School Board, which included a call for phone-free schools – there has been inaction by our school district. We need HB 2251 to pass so that Bend-La Pine School District, and all school districts in Oregon, prioritize creating policy that prohibits phones and personal device use in our schools.

(5) Parents lack awareness of the public safety officer and expert guidance which outlines the dangers phones pose to children (and their children's classmates and teachers) during a lock-down/active shooter situation due to the noise and distraction caused by phones when kids should be silent and focused on teacher instruction. Parent opposition to this bill is primarily related to safety and emergency situations. With increased awareness about the importance of kids NOT using phones during these emergency events for their own safety, opposition will wane.

We must look at the other states and school districts who are prohibiting the use of phones/personal electronic devices in their schools and having great success. As a nation, what we hear is that more states are passing and/or presenting phone-free school legislation, school districts are implementing the policies, and the results are positive. What we don't hear is that these states are reversing the legislation or that school districts are pushing back or that the results are negative. This means phone-free school legislation works, and it will work here in Oregon.

Please pass HB 2251.

Sincerely,
Brooke Mues
Co-founder
Well Wired