

Submitter:

Fernanda Pazmino

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB2251

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of HB 2251 as a high school teacher in Portland, Oregon. I teach in the Spanish in the World Language department at Franklin High School, where I've witnessed firsthand how smartphones are undermining our students' ability to focus, learn, and develop meaningful communication skills.

Franklin does have a phone policy on paper, but it is inconsistently enforced for some colleagues. Some teachers do their best to limit phone use, but others do not enforce the policy at all. As a result, phones are a constant presence in classrooms, hallways, and during lunch and passing periods. Even when students aren't actively using them, just having the device nearby creates distraction. Research confirms what I see daily: smartphones reduce attention and interfere with learning, even when turned off.

In terms of language acquisition verbal interaction is essential. Students need to be fully present to build fluency, vocabulary, and listening comprehension. But many students now struggle with face-to-face communication. They are more comfortable scrolling than speaking, and often turn to their phones rather than engaging with classmates. This damages not just their academic growth, but also their confidence and social development.

I've also seen the emotional toll: increased anxiety, social withdrawal, and difficulty building peer relationships. When students feel uncertain or overwhelmed, they retreat into their phones instead of learning to navigate challenges. This robs them of critical opportunities to develop resilience.

This isn't a problem individual teachers can solve alone. We need consistent, enforceable policies across all Oregon schools. A phone-free school day would help students reconnect with learning and each other — and give teachers the classroom environment they need to teach effectively.

I urge you to support HB 2251. Our students deserve focused, healthy school environments that support their academic, social, and emotional growth.

Sincerely,

Fernanda Pazmino

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