

Submitter: Steph Newton  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2251  
Chair Fredrick, Vice Chair Weber, and Members of the House Committee on Education,

My name is Steph Newton. While I serve as a City Councilor in Albany, I'm writing today in my most important role: as a parent. I'm a strong advocate for safe, supportive school environments, and I'm proud to support HB 2251.

Like many families, I've seen how access to personal devices during the school day can create real problems. For example, my 9-year-old daughter was shown disturbing content on a classmate's cellphone; a moment that never should have happened at an elementary school.

In our district, there isn't a policy against using cellphones, but cellphone use is broadly discouraged but inconsistently enforced. Some schools allow them at lunch, others don't. Some teachers even use phone time as a reward, which unintentionally pits educators against one another and creates confusion for students. There's growing research — and a lot of quiet agreement among educators- that a stricter, more uniform policy is the right move. But many districts hesitate to act alone, worried about backlash from a vocal minority.

That's why HB 2251 is so important. It gives school leaders the statewide backing they need to prioritize learning and student well-being. And I deeply appreciate the bill's robust protections for students with disabilities, ensuring those with IEPs, 504 plans, or medical needs aren't left behind.

This is the kind of clear, thoughtful policy that can improve student outcomes and help schools refocus on what matters most.

Please vote yes on HB 2251.

Thank you for your time and service.

Steph Newton