

## Testimony in Support of HB 2251: Restricting Cellphone Use in Schools

May 12, 2025

Dear Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Weber and Members of the Senate Committee on Education.

My name is Kristin Bride, and I am a Social Media Reform Advocate. I have come by this role in the worst way possible. I lost my 16-year-old son, Carson to suicide in June 2020, after he was viciously cyberbullied by his classmates at Riverdale High School in Portland, OR.

I have turned my grief into advocacy work and helped to pass an OR school bullying notification law, nicknamed Carson's Law in 2021.

With the absence of any State or Federal legislation to keep our kids safer online, we **MUST** turn to limiting the amount of time that kids spend on these addictive and psychologically harmful devices which are designed to distract and steal their attention.

After speaking with High School principals who have piloted "Bell to Bell" phone free schools, the overwhelming benefits become obvious very quickly:

- The incidents of cyberbullying decrease as phones are not available throughout the day.
- Students are learning necessary 1:1 interpersonal skills during lunch and recess that has eroded from excessive phone use.
- Lastly, banning cell phone use in school helps support the growing movement of parents who are delaying social media use for the health of their children.

We delayed giving Carson a phone until high school, yet his classmates began using iPhones in school as early as 4<sup>th</sup> grade. In 7<sup>th</sup> grade, a nude photo was spread of a 12-year-old female classmate who as a result left the school humiliated. In 9<sup>th</sup> grade, an anti-Semitic slur was posted and spread by one of Carson's classmates. In 10<sup>th</sup> grade Carson begged for Snapchat because despite school being in session **in person**, that was the way all the kids were connecting. The number of Snapchat friends not real friends was how students measured their worth.

Carson never made it to 11<sup>th</sup> grade because his classmates used their phones as weapons to cyberbully him until he ended his life. As a parent, I have experienced first-hand the horrors of allowing kids to use cellphones in schools: child pornography, hate speech, cyberbullying and the suicide of my son, Carson in a class of just 50 OR students. Let's not kid ourselves, these incidents are happening everywhere that kids have access to their phones throughout the day.

Please put Oregon kids first and pass the strongest version of HB 2251.

Sincerely,

Kristin Bride  
Lake Oswego, OR  
Parent Survivor to Carson- Forever 16

