

FAVORABLE
House Bill 147
County Boards of Education – Elementary and Middle Schools – Student
Technology Use Policy

Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment
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The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 147, which would require county boards of education to develop and adopt a policy limiting the use of a personal electronic device during school hours with certain exceptions for medical, emergency, or educational purposes. It would also require the policy to be published on the county board's website and in student handbooks.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

A recent poll of NEA members showed that 90 percent support school policies prohibiting the use of cell phones during instructional time.¹ Why such overwhelming support? Of those same educators, 83 percent report that students are having difficulty concentrating and completing assignments, trends which experts say correlate with increased access to cell phones.^{2 3} These concerns are not limited to teenagers. Even elementary and

¹ National Education Association. Internal member polling (2024).

² National Education Association. Internal member polling (2024).

³ How Phones Ruin Concentration. Child Mind Institute (2024). <https://childmind.org/article/kids-shouldnt-use-phones-during-homework/#:~:text=Multitasking%20leads%20to%20shallower%20thinking,Clinical%20Expert:%20Matthew%20Cruger%2C%20PhD>

middle school students have considerable daily screen time – according to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, U.S. children ages 8-12 are using devices or in front of screens for an average of 4-6 hours each day.⁴

It is impractical and often ineffective to enforce restrictions on cell phone usage when policies vary on a classroom-by-classroom basis. Enforcement must not be left up to individual educators; rather, schools need widely observed norms led by system leaders and administrators. We therefore encourage uniform, countywide policies that are crafted in partnership with local bargaining units and include thoughtful exceptions for circumstances like emergency, medical, or educational needs.

We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on House Bill 147.

⁴ Screen Time and Children. American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2024). https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Children-And-Watching-TV-054.aspx