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Prince George's County

MAJORITY WHIP

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Education, Business and
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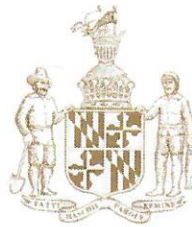
Joint Committees

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Joanne C. Benson SB130 Education - Student Personal Electronic Device Use - Policy Required House of Delegates- Ways and Means Committee

Good afternoon, Chair Vanessa Atterbeary, Vice Chair Jheanelle K. Wilkins, and Esteem Committee Members.

As a Legislator of District 24 and a retired Education of Prince George's County Schools, I am deeply committed to fostering a supportive and effective learning environment for our students. Today, I support the proposed legislation to ban cell phones in schools. This legislation's primary goal is to enhance our students' academic focus, mental health, and overall safety by reducing the distractions and potential harm associated with cell phone use during school hours.

Please Allow Me to Explain Why This Legislation Is Needed.

1. Enhancing Academic Focus:

- **Reducing Distractions:** Cell phones are a significant source of distraction in the classroom. By limiting their use, we can help students concentrate better on their studies and improve their academic performance.
- **Supporting Teachers:** Teachers often struggle to maintain students' attention when cell phones are present. This legislation will empower educators to create a more focused and engaging learning environment.

2. Promoting Mental Health:

- **Reducing Anxiety and Depression:** Research has shown that excessive cell phone use, particularly on social media, can contribute to increased anxiety and depression among students. By limiting access during school hours, we can help mitigate these mental health issues.
- **Encouraging Social Interaction:** Reducing cell phone use encourages students to engage more with their peers and develop essential social skills.

3. Preventing Cyberbullying:

- **Minimizing Online Harassment:** Cell phones can be used for cyberbullying, which can have severe emotional and psychological effects on students. A ban can help reduce these incidents and create a safer school environment.

4. Ensuring Safety and Integrity:

- **Reducing Cheating:** Cell phones can be used to cheat on exams and assignments. Banning them helps maintain academic integrity.
- **Managing Emergencies:** While some parents may worry about being unable to contact their children, schools can implement policies that allow emergency communication without disrupting the learning environment.

5. Supporting Evidence:

- **Personal Stories:** As a retired Principal and Educator, I have always been committed to ensuring the highest education standards in our schools. My involvement with the Prince George's County Public Schools District 24 has allowed me to hear firsthand the concerns of teachers and parents about the impact of cell phones in the classroom. For instance, during a recent discussion, a middle school teacher expressed frustration about the constant distractions caused by students using their phones during class. She highlighted that students often engage in non-educational activities such as texting, gaming, and browsing social media, significantly disrupting their learning process and hindering the overall classroom environment. Additionally, a concerned parent shared that her child's academic performance has declined due to excessive phone use during school hours, resulting in decreased attention to lessons and assignments. These examples underscore the urgent need for policies that effectively address the use of cell phones in schools to ensure that our students can focus on their education and reach their full potential.

Research and Data: Studies have consistently shown that limiting cell phone use in schools leads to better academic outcomes and improved mental health. For instance, a study by Anna Lamb, Harvard Gazette Staff Writer, (March 2023). Stated, in 2020, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that 77 percent of U. S. schools have moved to prohibit cell phones for nonacademic purposes.

Comparative Examples: Other states and districts, such as Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina have successfully implemented similar statewide restrictions with positive results. Their experiences can serve as a model for our efforts.

Finally, the proposed cell phone ban legislation is a crucial step toward creating a more focused, healthy, and safe learning environment for our students. Therefore, I urge your favorable vote to support this legislation and help us build a brighter future for our children.

Thank you for your time and consideration.