

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 130 (Senator Benson)
Education, Energy, and the Environment

County Boards of Education - Student Cellular Device Use Policy - Established

This bill requires each local board of education to develop and adopt a policy that (1) prohibits the use of cellular devices by students during instructional time; (2) requires students to store their cellular phone in a secure storage container during instructional time; and (3) includes appropriate disciplinary measures for violations of the policy. Under the bill, instructional time includes any time during the school day, except a student's lunch period and cellular device includes any portable wireless communication device, smartphones, tablets, or wearable devices. A policy developed in accordance with the bill may not prohibit a student from using a cellular phone (1) for any purpose documented in the student's individualized education program or Section 504 plan; (2) to monitor or address a student's health issue that has been documented by an educator or administrator; or (3) when directed by an educator or administrator for educational purposes. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2025.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill pertains to local school systems.

Local Effect: Local expenditures potentially increase for the acquisition of secure storage containers. Local boards of education can develop and adopt cellular phone use policies as specified with existing resources. Revenues are not affected. **This bill may impose a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Many local school systems have policies governing the use of cellular phones in schools or on school grounds, which are aligned with local codes of discipline. According to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), at least 19 of Maryland's 24 local school systems have recently updated or adopted new student cellular phone use policies as of September 2024. Additional local school systems are in the process of reviewing and updating policies. Policies vary across systems and schools and typically cover definitions, guidelines, compliance procedures, and consequences for violations. They also generally cover procedures for notifying parents and staff, and the responsibilities of school administrators and may provide differing levels of flexibility for elementary, middle, and high school students.

MSDE advises that the agency is in the process of convening the Task Force on Student Cell Phone Use in Schools. Comprising teachers, administrators, parents, students, superintendents, and other educational experts across all grade bands, the task force will review current policies across the State on allowable student use of cellular phones in schools. MSDE anticipates the task force will generate a set of policy recommendations to support school districts in addressing student cellular phone use by April 2025. In December 2024, the U.S. Department of Education released [Planning Together: A Playbook for Student Personal Device Policies](#) to help school district and school leaders develop policies on the use of personal devices in schools.

Local Fiscal Effect: Local expenditures may increase for the purchase of secure storage containers for student cellular phones during instructional time. To the extent that a local school system or individual school has already purchased storage containers, such costs are offset. To the extent student lockers or other existing school infrastructure can be used to securely store phones under the bill, costs are further offset.

Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) advises that the school system expects the average cost of a small container with a lock to be approximately \$50. With approximately 1,800 active instructional classrooms, FCPS estimates that the cost of purchasing one container per classroom is approximately \$90,000. Prince George's County Public Schools estimates that, assuming a cost of \$68 for a storage container capable of holding 36 cellular phones and assuming 60% of the system's 135,000 student population bring cellular phones to school, purchasing sufficient storage containers costs \$153,000. Potential out-year expenditures depend on the lifecycle of the storage containers purchased and the need for repairs/replacement of storage containers.

To the extent local school systems purchase individually locking cellular phone pouches rather than batch storage containers or another solution utilizing existing resources, costs increase further. Exact expenditures depend on the storage containers selected by school

districts; however, individually locking magnetic storage units can cost \$25 to \$30 per student. The Department of Legislative Services advises that the bill does not mandate the use of individually locking magnetic storage units and that actual costs to a local school system, if any, depend on the secure storage systems each system implements.

Local boards of education can develop and adopt new policies or modify existing policies in accordance with the bill's requirements using existing resources. The local school systems in Baltimore City and Anne Arundle, Montgomery, Prince George's and St. Mary's counties advise that they already have policies governing the use of cellular phones in schools.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See SB 112 of 2024.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Center for School Safety; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Baltimore City Public Schools; Frederick County Public Schools; Montgomery County Public Schools; Prince George's County Public Schools; St. Mary's County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

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