

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 57

(Delegate Fraser-Hidalgo)

Ways and Means

County Boards of Education - Student Cellular Phone Use Policy - Establishment

This bill requires each local board of education to develop and adopt a policy that (1) prohibits the use of cellular phones by students during instructional time; (2) requires students to store their cellular phone in a secure place during instructional time, including a locker, a closed backpack, or a storage container provided by the school; 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. 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; (2) to monitor or address a student's documented health issue; 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 boards of education.

Local Effect: Local boards of education can develop and adopt cellular phone use policies as specified with existing resources. Revenues are not affected.

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 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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