

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 147

(Delegate Wu, *et al.*)

Ways and Means

Education, Energy, and the Environment

County Boards of Education - Student Technology Use Policy - Requirements

This bill requires each local board of education to develop and adopt a policy on the use of personal electronic devices, including smartphones, tablets, laptops, smartwatches, or smartglasses, during school hours. The policy must include a limitation on the use of a smartphone or a device connected to a smartphone during instructional time. A policy developed in accordance with the bill must be published on the website of each local board of education and in each public school student handbook. The policy may not prohibit a student from using a smartphone or a device connected to a smartphone (1) for any purpose documented in the student’s individualized education program or section 504 Plan; (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 does not apply to a local board that has an existing policy on the use of personal electronic devices during school hours that includes a limitation on the use of a smartphone or a device connected to a smartphone during instructional time. **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, adopt, and publish cellular phone use policies as specified with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Many local education agencies (LEAs) have policies governing the use of cell 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 LEAs have recently updated or adopted new student cell phone use policies as of September 2024. Additional LEAs are in the process of reviewing and updating policies. Policies vary across LEAs 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 cell phones in schools. MSDE anticipates the task force will generate a set of policy recommendations to support school districts in addressing student cell phone use by April 2025.

Local Fiscal Effect: For local boards with an existing policy on the use of personal electronic devices as specified, the bill has no effect. Boards without a policy can develop, adopt, and publish the required policy with existing resources. The LEAs in Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Montgomery, Prince George's, and St. Mary's counties advise that they already have policies governing the use of cell 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 Center for School Safety; Maryland State Department of Education; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Baltimore City Public Schools; Baltimore County Public Schools; Charles County 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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