

SENATE BILL 29

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(PRE-FILED)

By: **Senators Waldstreicher and Ready**

Requested: September 12, 2024

Introduced and read first time: January 8, 2025

Assigned to: Education, Energy, and the Environment

A BILL ENTITLED

AN ACT concerning

Education – Phone-Free Schools Pilot Program – Establishment

FOR the purpose of establishing the Phone-Free Schools Pilot Program; requiring certain local school systems to develop and implement a policy that prohibits student cell phone use during the school day, subject to certain exceptions; and generally relating to the Phone-Free Schools Pilot Program.

BY adding to

Article – Education

Section 7-136

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2022 Replacement Volume and 2024 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Education

7-136.

(A) (1) IN THIS SECTION THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS INDICATED.

(2) “ELIGIBLE LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM” MEANS:

(I) THE CARROLL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM; AND

(II) THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM.

(3) “INSTRUCTIONAL TIME” MEANS ANY TIME DURING THE SCHOOL DAY, EXCEPT A STUDENT’S LUNCH PERIOD.

(4) “PILOT PROGRAM” MEANS THE PHONE-FREE SCHOOLS PILOT PROGRAM.

(B) THERE IS A PHONE-FREE SCHOOLS PILOT PROGRAM.

(C) THE PURPOSE OF THE PILOT PROGRAM IS TO COLLECT DATA TO DETERMINE THE EFFECT OF LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM POLICIES THAT LIMIT STUDENT USE OF CELL PHONES DURING THE SCHOOL DAY ON:

- (1) ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT;**
- (2) STUDENT CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT;**
- (3) STUDENT SOCIAL INTERACTIONS; AND**
- (4) STUDENT BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE.**

(D) (1) EACH ELIGIBLE LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM SHALL SELECT ONE MIDDLE SCHOOL AND ONE HIGH SCHOOL IN THE COUNTY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PILOT PROGRAM.

(2) EACH ELIGIBLE LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM SHALL:

(I) DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A POLICY THAT PROHIBITS STUDENT CELL PHONE USE DURING INSTRUCTIONAL TIME; AND

(II) ESTABLISH PROCEDURES TO ENFORCE THE POLICY, INCLUDING APPROPRIATE DISCIPLINARY MEASURES FOR VIOLATIONS.

(3) THE POLICY DEVELOPED UNDER THIS SUBSECTION MAY NOT PROHIBIT A STUDENT FROM USING A CELL PHONE:

(I) FOR ANY PURPOSE DOCUMENTED IN THE STUDENT’S INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM OR SECTION 504 PLAN;

(II) TO MONITOR OR ADDRESS A STUDENT’S DOCUMENTED HEALTH ISSUE; OR

(III) WHEN DIRECTED BY AN EDUCATOR OR ADMINISTRATOR FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES.

(E) (1) EACH ELIGIBLE LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM SHALL COLLECT DATA REGARDING THE STUDENT CELL PHONE USE POLICY, INCLUDING:

- (I) ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS IN THE SCHOOL;**
- (II) STUDENT CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT;**
- (III) STUDENT SOCIAL INTERACTIONS, INCLUDING BULLYING, CYBERBULLYING, AND HARASSMENT;**
- (IV) STUDENT BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE;**
- (V) ENFORCEMENT CHALLENGES;**
- (VI) STUDENT FEEDBACK ON THE POLICY;**
- (VII) TEACHER FEEDBACK ON THE POLICY; AND**
- (VIII) PARENT OR GUARDIAN FEEDBACK ON THE POLICY.**

(2) ON OR BEFORE SEPTEMBER 1, 2026, EACH ELIGIBLE LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM SHALL SUBMIT A REPORT BASED ON THE DATA COLLECTED UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION TO THE DEPARTMENT AND, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2-1257 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PILOT PROGRAM.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July 1, 2025.