

FAVORABLE
Senate Bill 130
County Boards of Education - Student Cellular Device Use Policy -
Established

Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment
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The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 130, which would require each county board of education to develop and implement a policy that prohibits students from using a cellular device during instructional time during the school day. It would also prohibit the policy from preventing a student from using a cellular device for any purpose documented in a student's individualized education program, to monitor or address a student's documented health issue, or for education purposes when directed by an educator or administrator.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

A recent poll of NEA members showed that 90 percent support school policies prohibiting the use of cell phones during instructional time.¹ Why such overwhelming support? Of those same educators, 83 percent report that students are having difficulty concentrating and completing assignments, trends which experts say correlate with increased access to cell

¹ National Education Association. Internal member polling (2024).

phones.^{2 3} Adolescents are increasingly spending large portions of their days using phones or other devices: according to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, U.S. children ages 8-12 are using devices or in front of screens for an average of 4-6 hours each day, and children over 13 are getting up to 9 hours of screen time each day.⁴

It is impractical and often ineffective to enforce restrictions on cell phone usage when policies vary on a classroom-by-classroom basis. Enforcement must not be left up to individual educators; rather, schools need widely observed norms led by system leaders and administrators. We therefore encourage uniform, countywide policies that are crafted in partnership with local bargaining units and include thoughtful exceptions for health, emergency, and educational circumstances.

We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on Senate Bill 130.

² National Education Association. Internal member polling (2024).

³ How Phones Ruin Concentration. Child Mind Institute (2024). <https://childmind.org/article/kids-shouldnt-use-phones-during-homework/#:~:text=Multitasking%20leads%20to%20shallower%20thinking,Clinical%20Expert:%20Matthew%20Cruger%2C%20PhD>

⁴ Screen Time and Children. American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2024). https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Children-And-Watching-TV-054.aspx