
TO: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

BILL: Senate Bill (SB) 130 - County Boards of Education - Student Cellular Device Use Policy – Established

DATE: January 29, 2025

POSITION: Letter of Information

Chair Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and the Maryland State Department of Education (Department) would like to share the following information regarding **Senate Bill (SB) 130 - County Boards of Education - Student Cellular Device Use Policy – Established**. As written, the bill requires that local boards of education develop and implement a policy to ban the use of cellular devices, including tablets, smartwatches, and other wearable devices, during instructional time. Specifically, it requires that students store the device in a secure storage container.

The State Board and the Department appreciate the intent of this bill to prioritize our youngest learners' academic engagement and to limit distractions within their schools and classrooms. We concur that every elementary, middle, and high school should have a clear, consistent, and research-informed policy to guide the use of cell phones in schools.

To that end, we are pleased to share that the Department and State Board have convened the Task Force on Student Cell Phone Use in Schools, scheduled to launch in January 2025, that will review current policies across the state on allowable student use of cell phones in schools and develop guidance to support school districts in addressing this issue. The task force consists of teachers, administrators, parents, students, superintendents, and other educational experts across all grade bands, who will collaborate to generate a set of resources for school districts by early spring 2025.

The majority of school districts in the state have updated policies in place that govern the use of cell phones in schools or on school grounds, which are aligned with local codes of discipline and may be differentiated for grade bands. Many school districts designed their policies in partnership with local parents and teachers through the use of surveys, voluntary pilot programs, and other engagement strategies. As the Task Force convenes, the Department and the State Board will continue to conduct a comprehensive review of existing policies and leverage the expertise of our stakeholders. Throughout this process, we will be sure to collaborate with our essential partners in the General Assembly.

We request that the committee consider this information as it deliberates **SB 0130**. Please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne, Executive Director of Government Affairs, at Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov or at 410-767-0504 or Hannah Oakley, Deputy Director of the State Board, at hannah.oakley@maryland.gov, if you would like any additional information.