

To: Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

From: Raneem Eberlein

Date: 1/27/25

Re: SB0029 – Favorable

I am a 10th grader at The Bryn Mawr school, in Baltimore city. This fall, our school introduced a gradual cell phone ban. As a student there, I experienced firsthand the effects of this policy on my academic and social life.

For some context, this policy had two main phases. For the first quarter of the school year, we had weekly “phone-free-Fridays” in which we turned our phones in to locked boxes in an administrator's office for the entire day. For the remainder of the school year, starting after Thanksgiving break, we went completely phone-free from 8am to 3:30pm – including lunches and passing periods. This policy was initially a trial to see how it impacted students’ mental health, academic performance, and social interactions – similar to what this bill is proposing.

Though students at Bryn Mawr were at first apprehensive about this policy, I can confidently say that when asked for feedback, our student body has had a generally positive perspective on its impacts. Students, including myself, felt closer to their peers, less anxious, and more present/focused. Personally, I experienced less reliance on my phone for daily tasks. I found myself actually trying to engage with my peers and friends instead of falling back onto my phone to keep me busy. I also found myself less anxious to check notifications or scroll on social media; instead I used the time to do homework or have a real conversation with friends.

However, I do think that Bryn Mawr’s phone ban impacted aspects of my school life in ways that hindered my efficiency. Phones allow for quick and easy communication – especially in regards to cancelling meetings or needing an answer to a question. So, when I needed to quickly contact someone, I couldn’t. Another issue was submitting homework, which was previously done through an app on my phone. After the ban, I would have to wait a lot longer to submit assignments, which caused me to sometimes forget to do so at home. With that being said, I think these issues are mainly solved by this bill. Allowing students their phones during lunch is less extreme and easier for students to adjust to. It gives students time to communicate with whomever they might need. Additionally, allowing students their phones when an administrator or educator deems it “educational” or acceptable gives more flexibility to the policy which makes it easier for students.

Lastly, I think the most important part of this bill is that a wider range of data will be collected about social and academic impacts. This is not only a phenomenal way to gain information about the effects of phones on a student’s education, social life, and mental health, but also

allows schools to determine whether the policy is actually having its intended effect – therefore allowing for it to adapt accordingly.