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Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West
Annapolis, MD 21401

Bill: Senate Bill 130 – Public Schools – County Boards of Education – Student Cellular Device Use Policy - Established

Position: Support with Amendment

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychological Association (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral-level psychologists throughout the state, is writing in SUPPORT with an amendment of Senate Bill 130 – Public Schools – County Boards of Education – Student Cellular Device Use Policy – Established. The bill addresses an important issue in our classrooms today – the highly distracting and disruptive nature of student cell phone use during instructional time. The solutions described in the bill appear to offer a reasonable and practical way to prohibit student cell phone use during instructional time, with appropriate exceptions noted for students with documented disabilities.

Beyond the adverse impact of detracting from the quality of instructional time, however, is the impact that a student’s cell phone use can have on their mental health. In many cases the impact can be quite toxic, resulting in increased anxiety and depression for vulnerable students. But at the same time, many students are benefitting from cell phone contact with their therapists while in school, and from the use of self-help apps such as Prosper (<https://www.prosperselfcare.com/>), which is already in use in the high schools of at least three Maryland public school systems. The bill’s language allows for an exception to the prohibition if the need is documented by a medical professional. For clarity we believe that this exception should specify a behavioral health professional as well, and we offer the following amendment, on page 2, line 15: "... LICENSED MEDICAL OR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL; ... "

Thank you for considering our comments on SB 130, with the proposed amendment. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact the Chair of MPA’s Legislative Committee, Dr. Stephanie Wolf, at mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted,

David Goode-Cross, Ph.D.

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President

Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.

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Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Richard Bloch, Esq., Counsel for Maryland Psychological Association
Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs