

Subject: Unfavorable: Establishing a Phone-Free Schools Pilot Program

Date: January 29, 2025

From: National Federation of the Blind of Maryland

15 Charles Plaza, #3002

President@nfbmd.org

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

The National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to vote against SB 29 as it is currently written. The intention of the bill is laudable, but in reality, it will create more problems than it solves.

The section of the bill that is problematic is “(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”. The student who has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan loses the confidentiality of their plan as soon as they use their phone. This confidentiality is an essential and longstanding aspect of these programs. Without it, the student may then be asked inappropriate questions about their disability by their peers. They may even be bullied, or worse, ostracized. This treatment will cause irreparable damage to both the individual student and their family. Persons with disabilities are not obligated to reveal their disability. Certainly, ensuring our students’ focus in school is of utmost importance, but you don’t solve one problem by creating another.

Please vote unfavorable on this bill.

For questions, please contact me at President@nfbmd.org or at 443-426-4110.