

Subject: Unfavorable: Maryland Phone-Free Schools Act

Date: January 29, 2025

From: National Federation of the Blind of Maryland

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President@nfbmd.org

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

The National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urges the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to vote against SB0368. 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 “(D) The policy developed under this section may not prohibit a student from using a cellular phone: (1) 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.