

**Testimony of the  
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners  
In Opposition of  
House Bill 147 County Boards of Education  
Elementary and Middle Schools –  
Student Technology Use Policy**

**January 23, 2025**

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners (the Board) understands the necessity of developing a policy for student use of technology and has a plan and is currently in the process of updating its policy. The current legislation is broadly consistent with revisions to the policy that staff is presenting to the school board for review. These revisions are one component of a multi-tiered strategy that Baltimore City Public Schools is undertaking to address the harm of students' excess use of cell phones and social media platforms. and severity of ensuring that all children and staff within the school system are safe and the Board wants to establish a safe environment for all students.

The proposed revisions being drafted for Board review are based on a pilot initiative currently underway to restrict student cell phone use in 25 schools, with promising results. The pilot cost approximately \$175,000 to date, with additional resources potentially required for full roll-out in all schools within City Schools, primarily for locker, pouches, and other storage devices for cell phones.

While City Schools understands this legislation is to prohibit only elementary and middle school students from using a cell phone or personal electronic devices during the school day, except for certain instances, it is imperative that no statewide effort limit the ability of school systems to adopt its own policy based on local needs and community feedback. Local control and autonomy are the cornerstone of school districts, especially when dealing with issues such as cell phones and electronic devices. Each school district community varies, and local boards should be authorized to adopt a policy without specific prescriptive language.

For the foregoing reasons, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners opposes House Bill 147 and urges an UNFAVORABLE report.

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