

**Testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee  
House Bill 630: County Boards of Education - Student Cellular Phone Use Policy -  
Establishment (Maryland Phone-Free Schools Act)**

**\*\*Support\*\*  
February 12, 2025**

Delegate Atterbeary, Delegate Wilkins, and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

On behalf of the Social Work in Schools Committee of the National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter, we would like to express our support for House Bill 630 County Boards of Education - Student Cellular Phone Use Policy - Establishment (Maryland Phone-Free Schools Act).

The Social Work in Schools Committee includes school social workers serving in school systems throughout Maryland, working daily with students, their families, and school staff to remove barriers to learning. These barriers include not only those that spring from basic needs (food, clothing, housing, healthcare), but also factors that impact social/emotional/behavioral availability. Youth—particularly adolescents—are developmentally peer-focused, and the rise and influence of social media have contributed to an explosion in these peer-influenced factors.

We strongly support the development of a state-wide model policy that puts guardrails on social media use during instructional time through controls on access to the full range students' personal digital devices. It should be tailored to students' ages and developmental levels as they progress through their school careers. It should allow for the flexibility for individual systems to develop policies that meet the unique needs of their school community but never sacrifice the social/emotional/behavioral impacts of the technology and, first and foremost, the educational progress of all students. It is the School Social Workers and their student support colleagues who manage the social/emotional fallout that ensues from the drama, but a wider range of students who are distracted from learning as the drama unfolds.

The Kaiser Family Foundation reports that as of December 2024, [31 states](#) across the range of the political spectrum have implemented, are piloting, or have introduced bans in their schools, and Johns Hopkins University reports that [20 LEAs](#) in Maryland have begun to take action. State-wide standards will help to provide equity for all Maryland's students.

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We encourage the Committee to ensure that all student-owned electronic media, beyond solely cell phones, with access to the internet be covered by this legislation. We also encourage the Committee to consider potential unintended consequences of allowing student use during emergency events.

We ask that you return a favorable report on House Bill 630.

Respectfully,

Gail L. Martin, LCSW-C  
Legislative Committee Liaison, Social Work in Schools Committee  
NASW-MD