

The Honorable Dr. Cashenna A. Cross
Councilwoman At Large, City of Glenarden, Maryland
RE Senate Bill 928 Maryland Phone Free Schools Act

Determination Favorable With Amendments

Chair and Members of the Committee,

I submit this testimony based solely on my experience in municipal leadership, where public safety, youth development, and accountability in local governance are daily responsibilities. After reviewing Senate Bill 928, I support the intent of this legislation to improve student focus, safety, and academic engagement by limiting personal electronic communication device use during the academic school day.

In local government, we regularly hear from parents, educators, and community stakeholders regarding classroom distraction, cyber related conflicts, and the growing challenges associated with unrestricted device access during instructional hours. Establishing consistent statewide expectations provides clarity for families while supporting school administrators in restoring learning environments centered on academic success.

Several amendments would strengthen implementation and ensure practical and equitable enforcement.

First, the bill should clearly preserve local flexibility so each county board may determine storage and enforcement models appropriate for its facilities, staffing capacity, and grade levels.

Second, emergency communication procedures should be explicitly defined to ensure parents understand how communication will occur during critical incidents while maintaining student safety.

Third, required reporting should emphasize measurable outcomes including discipline equity, school climate, and academic engagement so future adjustments are guided by verified data.

Finally, structured implementation guidance and administrator training support will be essential to prevent inconsistent enforcement across schools.

The prohibition against suspension or expulsion solely for policy violations reflects balanced governance and aligns with restorative approaches that strengthen rather than remove students from learning environments.

From a municipal perspective, strong schools contribute directly to safer communities, higher civic engagement, and long term community stability. When students are focused and supported during the school day, the benefits extend beyond the classroom and into the broader community.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report with amendments on Senate Bill 928.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honorable Dr. Cashenna A. Cross

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