

SB928 - County Boards of Education - Student Electronic Communication Device
Use Policy - Establishment (Maryland Phone-Free Schools Act)

Written Testimony (Favorable)
Submitted By: Cara Tenenbaum

Dear Members of the Education Energy and Environment Committee,

I am a parent of two children in Montgomery County schools, and have been concerned about the harm that electronic devices do to our children's developing brains. There is more than ample scientific research on the topic - on the decrease in children's attention spans, increase in depression and anxiety and increase in obesity. More germane to this discussion, however, is the decreased academic performance of students who have access to cell phones during the school day.

Also, of great importance is the need to ensure communication between students and their guardians during emergency events, like the one at Whitman HS recently. Threading this needle is difficult, and the safety of our students must be paramount.

In addition to banning personal communication devices, such as smartphones, schools (as well as parents and the state, generally) must also ban social media for teens.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I did not mention the over-reliance on devices that my children face in school. The teachers and students are required to use "ed-tech" like iXL which gamifies learning. While studies show that gamification can be useful, it is not helpful for complex problems, like mathematics, that are better solved on paper. I have numerous additional thoughts on this topic and will be reaching out to my county school board.

At this point, there is no data to oppose banning smartphones in schools.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony and your support of this bill.

Sincerely,
Cara Tenenbaum
Kensington, MD