

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

Written Testimony (Favorable)

Submitted 3/2/2026 By: Amy Zets Croke, Montgomery County Public Schools parent

Dear Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Amy Zets Croke and I am the proud parent of two children in Montgomery County Public Schools - a second grader and a sixth grader. I joined over 1,000 other Maryland parents in signing a community letter of support for a strong phone-free schools bill, and care deeply about this issue.

I would like to thank Senators Harris, Charles, A. Washington, and Carozza for championing this important bill on student personal electronic device use. I strongly support this bill based on the amendments made to the cross-filed House Bill 525, which removed exceptions for emergency use and added language to ensure devices are inaccessible during the instructional day.

Our kids need a distraction-free learning environment, and we know that cell phones (or, we call them in our household, “pocket computers”) are an addictive and endless source of distraction - not only to learning, but to real life. Texts and alerts are distracting for adults with fully developed brains, and our children’s brains simply cannot handle this sort of temptation. *The evidence is incredibly clear and worrisome, and we cannot ignore it: we know that greater phone use is associated with lower educational achievement.*

We also know cell phones are impacting our kids’ social development - instead of chatting in between classes and at lunch, kids are head down in their phones for a quick dopamine hit that negatively impacts their mental health in the long run. My sixth grader, who does not have a phone, reports that his friends check messages and are on their phones instead of engaging in person. While we cannot address phone or screen use outside of school, we can and should address it within school for the benefit of all kids. *A phone-free school policy would create a space for all children where they are free from distraction and can learn and connect with others.*

Maryland is making a number of strong investments in education, but these will all be undermined if students are unable to focus on learning because of their pocket computers. Our kids need safe, distraction-free zones where they can learn and grow together. *We know better, and must do better.*

Senate Bill 928 provides a consistent policy for all of Maryland’s schools, responds to what the majority of parents and educators want, and, importantly, aligns with the available evidence on learning. *In short, the Maryland Phone-Free Schools Act is good for our children.*

I urge you to support the Maryland Phone-Free Schools Act to protect our Maryland kids’ education. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Amy Zets Croke
Silver Spring, MD