

**B 928 – County Boards of Education – Student Electronic Communication Device Use Policy – Establishment**  
**Written Testimony – Favorable**

**Submitted by:** John Finisdore

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

I write in strong support of SB 928 as a parent of two children in the Maryland public school system and as someone with substantial professional knowledge of technology and its impacts. I appreciate the Committee's consideration of this important legislation and urge a favourable report.

First, I would like to thank Senators Harris, Charles, A. Washington, and Carozza for championing this bill and for their thoughtful work to strengthen it. I am particularly supportive of the amendments made to the cross-filed House Bill 525, which removed broad exceptions for emergency use and added clear language requiring that personal electronic communication devices be inaccessible during the instructional day. These changes meaningfully improve the bill and ensure that its intent can be implemented consistently and effectively across school systems.

A statewide K–12 prohibition on personal electronic communication devices during the instructional day is long overdue. Smartphones and similar devices are intentionally designed to capture attention and interrupt focus. In classrooms, this directly undermines learning by distracting students, fragmenting their attention, and reducing meaningful engagement with teachers and peers. Even when devices are not actively being used, their presence alone creates a constant cognitive pull that interferes with instruction.

Equally important is the requirement for mandated storage that ensures devices are truly inaccessible during the school day. Policies that allow phones to remain in pockets or backpacks are difficult to enforce and place an unreasonable burden on teachers, who should be focused on teaching rather than policing device use. Clear, uniform storage requirements remove ambiguity, support consistent enforcement, and create a calmer, more focused learning environment for all students.

I also strongly support the limited and well-defined exceptions included in the bill. Accommodations for students with IEPs or 504 plans, documented medical needs, language translation tools, or necessary communication with caregivers are appropriate and necessary. These exceptions ensure equity and accessibility while preserving the overall integrity of a phone-free instructional day.

Finally, the prohibition on social media use at school is a critical component of this legislation. Social media platforms contribute significantly to anxiety, cyberbullying, and social pressure among students. Limiting access during the school day helps protect

student well-being and reinforces schools as places for learning, not constant online engagement.

SB 928 strikes the right balance between protecting instructional time, supporting student mental health, and allowing for necessary accommodations. I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on this bill and help Maryland move toward healthier, more focused learning environments for our children.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. P. ...', written over a light gray rectangular background.

5418 Harwood Rd

Bethesda MD 20814