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BILL: HB 163
TITLE: County Boards of Education - Student Technology Use Policy - Requirements
HEARING DATE: February 5, 2026
POSITION: UNFAVORABLE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
CONTACT: Jessica Goff, Governmental Affairs Associate (jgoff@mabe.org)

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the State's local boards of education, **opposes House Bill 163 County Boards of Education - Student Technology Use Policy - Requirements.**

House Bill 163 requires that each county board develop and adopt a policy prohibiting or limiting the use of personal electronic devices by students during school hours. The bill provides that the policies must prohibit the use of personal electronic devices in elementary and middle schools and must limit the use of personal electronic devices in high schools. There are limited exceptions: for a purpose documented in a student's individualized education program or 504 plan; for monitoring or addressing a student's documented health issue; or when directed by an educator or administrator for educational purposes. The bill further requires establishing enforcement policies and procedures, as well as disciplinary actions for violations.

While MABE appreciates the intent of the bill to improve conditions for teaching and learning, MABE believes that the decision on whether and how to adopt such a policy should be the responsibility of each local board of education. MABE believes that legislation which limits local board decision-making authority (like prescribing whether to have, or the content of, a student technology use policy) weakens the county board's bond with the local community and adversely impacts the community's participation in the governance and operation of their local school system.

Importantly, a 2025 Department of Legislative Services (DLS) [Issue Paper](#) states, "According to the Maryland State Department of Education, 19 [local school systems] recently updated their cell phone policies, and the remaining 5 LSS are currently reviewing or updating their policies." The same report notes that "while the concerns about the impacts of student cell phone use in schools on student learning, behavior, and mental health are compelling, the effectiveness of new laws and policies restricting their use remains uncertain... Fifty-six percent of parents believed students should be allowed to use their cell phones in schools, even during class time if approved by the teacher. Only



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32% of parents support a total cell phone ban in school, even if the policy has exceptions for health or student support purposes.” This disparity only further emphasizes that the specific policies are best left up to the county boards who are most responsive to the communities they serve.

Because the majority of Maryland’s school systems have existing policies on student technology use, and because these decisions are best left to the local boards of education that are most responsive to the individual needs of their communities, MABE respectfully requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 163.