



**House Ways and Means Committee  
February 5, 2026**

**House Bill 163: County Boards of Education – Student Technology Use Policy –  
Requirements**

**\*\*Support\*\***

On behalf of the Social Work in Schools Committee of the National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter, we would like to express our support for House Bill 163 – County Boards of Education – Student Technology Use Policy – Requirements.

The Maryland Social Work in Schools Committee includes school social workers serving in school systems throughout Maryland, working daily with students, their families, and school staff to remove barriers to learning and support student wellbeing. These barriers include struggles to meet basic needs (food, clothing, housing, healthcare), and factors that impact social, emotional, and behavioral well-being. Personal technology devices (from cell phones to watches to Smart Glasses with internet access) have a hugely negative impact on the social, emotional and behavioral well-being of our youth.

Youth—particularly adolescents—are developmentally peer-focused, and the use of personal technology devices in school fuels peer conflicts, anxiety, bullying and harassment, distraction from academics, and lagging social skills development. [Johns Hopkins University researchers](#) note that, “mounting research suggests that smartphone use may be fueling the country’s mental health crisis among youth—and leading to problems in schools that range from dwindling attention spans to a lack of engagement in learning and stymied social-emotional development.”

Writing this testimony as a school social worker in Maryland for 35 years, when bullying, harassment or drama related to personal technology use occurs in schools, the greater school community is affected. Students may self harm based on the damage inflicted by posts on social media during school. Crisis support from the school social worker, school counselor, or school psychologist, or outside providers (such as a mobile crisis team or emergency room staff) may be needed. Other students are distracted and/or upset. Instructional time is lost in class and teachers must regroup. Administrators must take time to address discipline violations. Loss of learning and a decreased sense of belonging happens when students are suspended for technology violations. Law enforcement personnel may be called to school. Overall student well-being and morale decreases. Along with the harm to students (and staff) well-being, there is an incredible amount of time spent addressing personal technology issues that takes away from the primary mission and purpose of our schools.

(over)

The Kaiser Family Foundation reports that as of April 2025, [35 states](#) across the range of the political spectrum have implemented, are piloting, or have introduced bans in their schools, and Johns Hopkins University reports that [20 LEAs](#) in Maryland have begun to take action. State-wide standards will help to protect students across Maryland. State-wide legislation (rather than Board of Education policies) will also support administrators as they support their staff creating a welcoming, supportive, safe environment in our schools.

We strongly support the development of legislation that puts guardrails on social media use during instructional time by limiting access to the full range students' personal technology devices. The policy should be tailored to students' ages and developmental levels, and allow flexibility for individual systems to meet the unique needs of their school community (such as student health issues) but mitigate the social, emotional, and behavioral impacts of personal device technology on the well-being and educational progress of all students.

We encourage the Committee to ensure that all student-owned electronic media with access to the internet be covered by this legislation. We also encourage the Committee to consider potential unintended consequences of allowing student use during emergency events.

We ask that you return a favorable report.

Respectfully,

Holly Flanagan, LCSW-C, Chair  
NASW-MD Social Work in Schools Committee and Maryland School Social Worker