



HB0163 – COUNTY BOARDS OF EDUCATION – STUDENT TECHNOLOGY USE POLICY – REQUIREMENTS

February 5, 2026

WAYS AND MEANS

OPPOSE

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) opposes **HB0163 – County Boards of Education – Student Technology Use Policy – Requirements**. This bill requires each county board to develop and adopt a policy prohibiting or limiting the use of personal electronic devices by students during school hours. The policy must prohibit the use of personal electronic devices during school hours for elementary and middle school students and limit the use of personal electronic devices during school hours for high school students. Such a policy developed may not prohibit a student from using a personal electronic device: (1) for any purpose documented in the student’s individualized education program or Section 504 plan; (2) to monitor or address a student’s documented health issue; or (3) when directed by an educator or administrator for educational purposes.

The required policy must be published on the county board’s website, published in the school’s student handbook, and reviewed every two years by the State Department of Education and local board. Finally, each county board is required to establish policy and procedures to enforce the policy established, including appropriate disciplinary measures for violations.

AACPS opposes this bill which would infringe upon local control of educational policy regarding student use of cell phones. Local governance by boards of education is essential to a comprehensive system of public education. Retaining local board authority allows for collaboration and cooperative planning within the local community rather than through top-down decisions from the State. In fact, Section 4-101 of the Education Law Article states, “educational matters that affect the counties shall be under the control of a county board of education,” and that local boards of education, “determine, with the advice of the county Superintendent, the educational policies of the county school system.” Local boards of education receive and rely on public input to best address local needs. The relationship between the community and local public schools encourages participation by parents/guardians and other community members in the educational process so that everyone has responsibility for and ownership of public education. Retaining decision-making authority at the local level allows local boards of education to best balance educational practices, available resources to implement those practices, public input, and accountability.

Furthermore, the Board of Education of Anne Arundel County and the Superintendent have already adopted a policy and regulation governing student use of cell phones, Policy JCO and Regulation JCO-RA – Use of Personal Electronic Communication devices by Students. In addition to this policy and regulation, AACPS has adopted student cell phone guidelines which further restrict student cell phone use. Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on HB0163.