
TO: House Ways and Means Committee

BILL: Senate Bill (SB) 928 - County Boards of Education - Student Electronic Communication Device Use Policy - Establishment (Maryland Phone-Free Schools Act)

DATE: April 1, 2026

POSITION: Support

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) support SB 928, which requires county boards of education to develop, adopt, and implement a policy prohibiting students' use of personal electronic devices during school hours, with certain limited exceptions. The State Board and MSDE appreciate the intent of this legislation and subsequent amendments to prioritize students' academic engagement and reduce distractions in schools and classrooms. Establishing clear, consistent, and research-informed policies on student use of personal electronic devices is an important step toward creating focused learning environments across Maryland.

Importantly, this legislation establishes a strong, statewide expectation for bell-to-bell restrictions on student cell phone use, helping ensure consistency across schools while maintaining limited, appropriate exceptions. The bill also includes a prohibition on student access to and use of social media during the school day, reinforcing its focus on minimizing distractions and supporting student well-being. The State Board and MSDE further support the bill's emphasis on equitable and developmentally appropriate discipline practices. Ensuring that local policies are implemented in a manner that is fair, consistent, and supportive of all student groups will be critical to successful implementation.

Additionally, the bill's reporting and transparency requirements represent an important step toward accountability and continuous improvement. By requiring local education agencies to report on policy implementation and outcomes, the State will be better positioned to understand what approaches are most effective and to support ongoing refinement of local policies.

SB 928 appropriately balances clear statewide expectations with local flexibility, allowing districts to implement policies that reflect their unique community needs while aligning with shared goals for student learning and engagement. This approach is consistent with the priorities and recommendations identified by the State Board's Task Force on Cell Phone Use in Schools, as well as its subsequent guidance and the resolution adopted in August 2025.

The State Board and MSDE extend our support on SB 928. We appreciate the General Assembly's leadership on this issue and its continued commitment to supporting strong, locally responsive policies that promote student learning and well-being.

Please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of Government Affairs, at laurel.cratsley@maryland.gov, or Hannah Oakley, Deputy Director of the State Board, at hannah.oakley@maryland.gov, if you would like any additional information.