



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Official Testimony of Senator Kevin M. Harris in Support of SB 928

SB 928, the Maryland Phone-Free Schools Act, requires each county board of education to adopt and implement a bell-to-bell policy that prohibits the use of personal electronic devices during the school day. It also requires safeguards to prevent access to social media platforms on school grounds, while maintaining clear exceptions for health, accessibility, and safety.

Across Maryland, educators are facing a growing challenge: competing with smartphones and social media for students' attention. National data shows that the vast majority of students acknowledge using their phones during class time, often for extended periods. That represents a significant loss of instructional time and shifts classroom focus away from teaching and learning.

This is not simply about devices. It is about the constant pull of social media. These platforms are intentionally designed to capture attention and encourage continuous engagement. When students have unrestricted access throughout the school day, educators are forced to compete with an environment built to distract.

The impact extends beyond academics. Families and teachers across the state are seeing the effects of increased anxiety, social comparison, and online pressure that does not stop at the school doors. The U.S. Surgeon General has warned about the link between excessive social media use and youth mental health challenges.

The House advanced this legislation last year, and this year's bill reflects further refinement. Amendments have been submitted to strengthen the language, streamline implementation by removing unnecessary exceptions, and clearly define social media to ensure comprehensive coverage of major platforms.

Several Maryland counties have already begun piloting phone-free policies and are reporting improvements in classroom engagement and school culture. SB 928 builds on that progress by establishing a consistent statewide standard so that every student, regardless of location, benefits from a focused and supportive learning environment.

SB 928 is a thoughtful, practical step to reinforce Maryland's investment in education, support teachers, and safeguard student well-being. I respectfully urge a favorable report.