

# Distraction-Free Schools



[MD Community Letter of Support](#) | Launched 11/8/25 | **935** signed as of 2/16/26

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## Testimonials in Support of Phone-Free Schools

This is one of the key issues of our time. Please do the right thing and support children by supporting these initiatives. Thank you.

My husband and I volunteer at our daughter’s school. During one of the socials (6th grade) young students were not talking to each other. They were on the phones. Looking down instead of dancing or talking.

My son is 13, and 75% of our disagreements are over the phone/ screen time. Even short exposures lead to addiction and aggression.

When I teach in my high school classrooms, I simply cannot compete with the addictive draw of smartphones, even as I require students to secure their phones in a storage holder on a countertop in my classroom. Most students still do not comply. For this reason, I strongly believe that students need to turn in their phones as soon as they enter the school building at the beginning of the day. Otherwise, any rules that individual teachers have in their own classrooms become, at best, erratically followed, and at worst, a demoralizing waste of energy and time.

I have observed the addictive nature of phones on children, which reduces their ability to focus and have meaningful connection with others.

Kids have to work so much harder to gain normal social skills. Heads are always down any minute they aren’t in class. Also, the teachers don’t enforce no phones during class so the current rule is useless.

My son school say they can’t get rid of access to IG bc they post things that are relevant to the students - like sports practice times. Whatever happened to email or announcement boards??!!

As an educator over the past decade and a half, I have seen students consumed in the world of their phones with negative consequences such as anxiety, bullying, and digital dependence.

I have twin 5 year old daughters and am very worried about the presence of smartphones in their classroom as they get older. I think the harms to learning, child safety, and overall mental health are significant. I also believe that this problem can only be addressed through collective action. This is an urgent problem.

At best, phones and social media distract what should happen at school IMO, but often a more negative impact happens.

My 15 year old daughter comes from her HS saying how lonely she feels - when I noted that she just came back from school, she said teens don't really engage that much during recess with each other - many use this time to catch up on their phones that are away during the class.

My observation is that there needs to be more civic engagement for both the teacher and the student.

Teachers award students with "good" classroom behavior by granting "cell phone time" at the end of class. My child does not have a cell phone and cannot participate in this supposed reward.

The story of a 19 year old student who talked regularly with chat gpt and formed a relationship with her. He ended up sharing about his depression with chat gpt and then asking her how to make a noose and then went onto commit suicide by hanging himself with the noose. Our children need to have opportunities to build real relationships during these valuable years without tech and/or AI. They need to learn about the dangers of tech/AI rather than only focus on the benefits and be inundated with tech.

In my work as a psychologist and Maryland parent, I see firsthand the harm of Maryland's delay in adopting this common sense legislation. Daily, children are exposed to harmful content in the places where we want them to focus on learning, and educators are forced to compete with algorithm-generated constant distraction. I've seen too many Maryland children negatively impacted. Please adopt this common sense legislation.

I am shocked by the things that my children hear from other kindergarteners about social media - at the age of 5, other children are already being exposed to things at home so it is vital that we protect their time at school from this exposure. At 5 years old, these children are at such a vulnerable stage of cognitive development.

I'm a parent of two middle school aged children AND a 30-year veteran public school teacher with both middle and high school experience. In my 30 years in the classroom I've seen a devastating and terrifying shift in children's ability to regulate their emotions and attention. I

believe there are many factors but the devices and their pull is too much to ask these developing brains to endure. Please enact this ban. We are at a crossroads and your decisive leadership is crucial.

I am a parent and child psychologist in Montgomery County, Maryland. The increase in child and teen mental health struggles in the last 10 years has been frightening, and much of it is related to social media use and limited face-to-face social interactions due to overuse of technology. Our youth desperately need a large chunk of their day with no smart phones to rebuild social skills and foster sustained attention while at school. Other states and countries are already making these changes and are pleased with the results. Our children deserve the same chance at a normal childhood.

There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that social media and phones are why several of my friends have had to hospitalize their girls for mental health reasons, why my children struggle to stay focused and why my children did not learn as much as they should have. I strongly support the full removal of tech from education until the end of high school. It's a failed experiment.

Children taping and posting fights.

I am personally seeing how social media on my phone distracts me at work. I want to make sure my kids don't have that distraction at school.

Parenting 3 former MoCo students. There is a significant body of data that shows the use of social media is very destructive for kids' sense of themselves, their safety and social status in their peer group, the broader social standards, and their exposure to violence and sexual coercion and subjugation.

Why condone it? AND the schools should absolutely NOT use it as a means of communication with students or as a tool of communication for schoolwork.

I was disappointed that Montgomery County Public Schools instituted a bell-to-bell policy for middle school, but not for high school. Beyond that, my son's middle school does not enforce this policy, despite having been one of the pilot schools of a bell-to-bell policy last year. All of my son's friends have smart phones and social media and use them in school. This detracts from the learning and community purposes of school, and puts immense pressure on kids who don't have smart phones and social media to get them (despite their parents wanting to choose the best time for their child to get access to these tools). I support a state-wide bell-to-bell ban on smart phones, and hope there will be a mechanism for schools to actually enforce the policy.

We have struggled with depression in our 13-14 year old, and observed addictive qualities of electronics and social media in our 11 and 7 year olds; as well as our friends' children. Banning electronics has led to rebound of the kids emotionally within a day or two. Only to over time

slowly give more and more leeway until the problem recurs. A big part of the problem is that they spend a large part of their day in school, and the norms there set a significant boundary condition on any effect our engagement at home can have.

Electronics, smartphones (dumb phones are fine), social media, really need to be minimized or eliminated while our kids are developing. Otherwise we risk losing a generation or two before society wakes up. These are highly destructive technologies for kids developing minds and I guess we have not caught up because it is all new. Kids need to be encouraged to communicate face to face and in person with friends and others in general.

Let me preface my statement by relaying that we have 4 teenaged children (13, 13, 15, 17) and our two oldest were provided phones at 14 because their jobs/sports require public transportation and the phones are for safety and coordination. None of our children have their own laptop, play video games or watch television, except on weekends as a family. We have worked and parented with purpose to give our kids as much of a tech-free childhood as possible.

Smart phones are addictive. If kids have them in school, they will find a way to use them, even if use is prohibited. I don't want my kids to have that distraction.

It is clear that social media companies are not willing to take action to protect young people from toxic content. State and local governments must step up.

Attending a phone-free school has made a huge difference for my 8th grader. She reports that she and others are learning more and are much less distracted, and it appears that her friendships are also improved.

It is not enough to tell children to not use; we know it's addictive. Even if one's own child does not bring his/her phone to school, or has the phone on "downtime" unable to be used, still other childrens' phones are distractions.

This is a collective action problem. Half the kids need their phones because the other half have their phones. This is a prime example where legislation can help!

I have been a volunteer in a Montgomery County high school for the past 10 years and have witnessed firsthand the increasingly detrimental impact cellphones are having on the students' ability to concentrate, participate and learn. It's sad and frustrating to observe. My heart goes out to the teachers whose job is being made unnecessarily more difficult and to the students themselves who are missing so many learning opportunities.

As a teacher, I see phones eroding the student's social skills and ability to focus in class. As a parent, I'm concerned about the amount of tech and screen time used mindlessly in the classroom without educational benefit.

At a very young age the obsession with technology has been an ongoing struggle with my kids. Their behavior changes and their moods towards other childhood activities become less exciting. My children complain of boredom without electronics. The days of walking to friends' houses seemed to be lost.

We decided during elementary school that technology was not necessary for our children to thrive. We limited use to less than 2 hours a day on weekends only. Weekday usage is nearly zero and the kids after years of enforcing don't question. They enjoy their friends and toys and nature to the fullest.

Children as young as kindergarten have been given Apple Watches which cause curiosity for children. I'm happy to see my children understand it's not necessary to be connected all the time. They know where to find me and how without using technology. I'd like to keep it this way.

I CARED FOR MY NEPHEW IN HS AND THE PHONE WAS A HUGE ISSUE SO TAKE THEM. NO COMPLAINTS FROM ME.

One of the lessons learned from K-12 is how to socialize with peers and adults face-to-face. Hiding behind technology won't serve them well as adults.

I helped my son's middle school, Eastern Middle School, become a phone free school last year. The principal got rolling carts with file folders and kids put their phones in the folders in their last period teacher's class at start of day. Cart was wheeled to closet next to main office in case of emergency evacuation of school, it would be wheeled outside. Kids went and got phones from last period teacher at end of day. It wasn't simple but was also doable and my son greatly benefited from being able to focus in class, talk to friends in hallways between class, engage with friends at lunch and play outside, and just have a break from the phone all day long. He no longer has this in high school and I see the ridiculous number of hours he logs on his phone each day.

My 4th grader is at the precipice of the negative effects of phone use and social media. Maryland must be a leader across the nation in protecting students and fostering a safe learning environment. The studies are clear and irrefutable, students do not need access to phones and social media throughout the day, and they do not need the influence of social media harming their developing brains at such a developmentally important time. You know the right thing to do, and we hope you can find the strength to do it.

I support this legislation yet, it is missing a component, which is Education. Teachers need to teach students WHY this legislation is important. Children lose so much of their life scrolling. They lost time, reading books, playing outside, visiting friends, learning normal social queues, helping the community and more.

I have seen video footage of a student being knocked unconscious in my son's HS cafeteria, instead of students stepping in to help. This is a regular occurrence, and then it gets posted to social media platforms. This is not the behaviour I would expect in any society much less a school environment, a place of learning.

I am a public health professor at American University and teach courses on teen mental health. Social media/screen time is a major contributor to the current teen mental health crisis. I am happy to see my state moving in this direction to protect our youth.

My middle school kid does not have a phone. She has great focus and the ability to engage with children and adults of all ages. She is curious and analytic. She is also socially isolated because social life has moved to phones. She is there for putting pressure on me to give her a phone. I have to choose between social isolation and knowing that the technology will rot her brain and isolate her in a completely different way. If all the kids don't have phones and the messaging is that in-person interaction is more important, it would go a long way since school is life for children of school age.

As a parent and a longtime youth sports coach, I've seen the pernicious effects of addictive phone use and social media up close. I've seen engaged, gregarious and inquisitive kids flip like a switch upon getting their first phone, disappearing into the void almost immediately. Carpool trips to the ballpark that were once filled with conversation and laughter grew quiet, as kids spent the time in the back seat scrolling instead of chatting with one another.

Mobile phone use is a singular destroyer of attention, connection and social well-being. I am fully committed to getting these devices out of our kids' hands for as much time as possible, allowing them to fully develop as human beings and pursue their education with the attention and intent it deserves.

My daughter was addicted to social media and unable to put down her phone ( without flipping out) during her entire adolescence.

Learning has improved since phones have been banned from class.

As a past parent of 2 and teacher, these devices have no place in the learning environment. Lock and Leave in for entire day.

BCC has required students to put phones in cubbies near the door of the classroom to have phones put away during instructional time. It has seemed to work very well. Not all teachers enforce it. But, getting more and more to do so would be helpful.

As a teacher I definitely see an improvement in attention among students with an away all day policy in middle school.

Two years ago, I observed a middle school classroom where the students were taking selfies and texting rather than engaging in learning.

I'm okay with dumb phones. Not smart phones.

As a parent and a mental health professional, I am confident in the necessity of this important legislation for our young people, particularly now, as tech giants have too few regulations to guide them.

Smartphones can be great tools, but they also are major distractions from learning. We all know that phones are terrible for attention. Parents who want to keep their kids away from phones face a huge collective action problem. We are undermined if phones are all over the school. Get them out and we at least stand a chance.

My neighbor who is a high school English teacher at MCPS says it's an amazing transformation in the classroom after the no phone rule...her students have longer and more quality attention span, they have better critical thinking and participation.

I am increasingly concerned about the distractions that phones create as well as the anxiety and other mental health concerns that not being connected while other friends are is generating with my teenage son. I don't think you can tackle phone use at an individual level, and creating a shared norm and climate is critical to supporting all learners. This is also for the benefit of the teachers--we have received several notes home from different teachers asking parents to help keep their kids off devices (and headphones) because of the challenges they create in the classroom.

The Anxious Generation by Jonathan Haidt says it all -- we MUST take control of technology use in education so that children can learn academic and social skills without constant, harmful distractions.

The research and all our experience supports that this isn't helpful for our children. It is unsafe and unhealthy. While hard at the start, we will all learn.

As time moves on, there are more studies numbering the negative effects of electronics on children. They will intersect with technology regardless but we can help them by limiting their time during school hours

As a clinical social worker focused on child abuse prevention and response, I am strongly in favor of any policies and procedures that reduce internet and social media usage among children at school. Increased use of social media and unsupervised access to the internet increases unwanted exposure to sexual material and increases the potential for online enticement. While social media and the internet are not going away, we must do everything we can to ensure age-appropriate access and mitigate the potential for abuse.

Phones away all day is the way to go. Let's not give more money to social media companies, whose sole purpose is to keep us (and our kids) glued to screens to make more money.

The phone is a distraction and her grades dropped.

Kids are so much better off playing in real life and playing outside than on screens!!!!

EMF radiation is strong whenever you touch a laptop and even stronger for cellphones not on airplane mode. Also, no one is supervising what students are doing (with their phones) on the school buses.

As a mental health professional with extensive training and experience in child development and mental health in kids and teens, I strongly support a bell-to-bell ban on phone use in schools as well as banning the use of social media for school or teacher communications with students.

I've also seen how children in school have access to their iPhones and social media accounts and using those platforms to communicate and share inappropriate information. Then as teachers we need to go and "parent" parents about their responsibilities and reprimand their child in school.

My son and daughter are addicted to their phones and have an average phone screen time of 6 hours per day despite all our attempts to limit screen time and to make them aware of the risks. Teachers have also told me that they struggle to ensure my son stays off his phone during their class and that they can't constantly fight with the kids to put their phones in the cubbies.

Especially in high schools students are allowed to take pictures of the material they are supposed to work on during class and always need phone while studying since they argument that material they need is in their phone, what is very distracting in all aspects.

All three of my high school age children report they PREFER when phones are put away. It is EASIER to learn all of them save. Students will WELCOME bell to bell phone bans. It is offensive and outrageous that this is even a question when the vast majority of teachers want a bell to bell ban. The teachers should be allowed to decide if and what type of ban will be in their school. No other opinion or preference is relevant.

I am a teacher and parent in MCPS. My son is not allowed to bring his phone to school however, it's only because I've been teaching in the county for 25 years and I have seen the downfall of education due to cell phone use. Students are like zombies. It's like playing whack-a-mole in my classroom constantly telling them to put phones away. They always find a way to bring them back out. The only solution is no phone used in schools. Period.

My son's private school has banned all devices and learning has significantly improved.

As a parent that has lost a child to a social media online harm. The phones are a distraction and concerned with children academics, peer to peer communication, and teacher instructions is to name a few.

I have taught at the college level for the last 20 years. Many of the students I have now grew up with unlimited access to smart phones and social media. It has changed the way they behave in the classroom and interact with others. I work very hard to build community in my classroom but this has become significantly more difficult in the last five years. Students are not building the habits and skills needed to stay engaged in problem solving and stay present and focused, which is needed for them to do their best work! I want more for my daughter. I want her to build community with the people around her, to find her support network of real people, and to live a shared experience with the kids in her classes.

My son is often distracted by his phone which consumes his attention

As the aunt of 3 young children who will be soon entering school - and as someone who personally does not use a smart phone because of the observable negative impacts it had on my mental health and well-being - I firmly support the idea that phones should not be accessible to children during school hours, as they not only impact their focus, concentration, and ability to learn, but have long-term repercussions on their development and well-being.

Magruder cluster for 2021-current. Our children are grades 5th and 3rd respectively for the present 2025-26 school year. Just a few observations: Elementary-age (meaning as young as 3rd, 4th & 5th graders) MCPS students \*\*are being given smartphones by a parent or caregiver.\*\* My 10- and 8-year-old children will not receive a smartphone until as late as possible in their lives. Young people up to a certain age \*\*do not need internet on a phone.\*\* If MCPS commits to this "balcony view" approach, that will be starting on the right foot. Some students do need a phone, yes, for logistical planning and family connections. But that's it. Do you really need to text it so we can further damage your ability to interact socially, make eye contact, and speak to someone? What is it exactly that's on the internet that you NEED TO SEE SO BAD while walking around at the age of 9? Go on a computer if it's so important. When elementary and middle-school age students' are showing up with smartphones, how are any of us to know which ones have any parental controls installed? Last year a 5th grade-age girl student would get on my childrens' school bus and go on Instagram immediately. My children no longer ride the bus for many reasons such as this one. The buses have simply become unsafe. How is her having a smartphone on her school bus safe? How do I know what predators might be watching and interacting with that 5th grader on her Instagram account, waiting to groom her and extort her family? What accounts is she allowed to follow? Do her parents even monitor what she is looking at? What if \*my child\* happens to be looking over her shoulder, and then sees a pornographic image appear on that girl's phone? What happens when a group of 6th grade-age boys all assemble around ONE kid's phone in the back of a bus where the driver has zero clue what they're looking at, and say that smartphone has full unfettered access to Google

Chrome or Youtube? If nothing is to be done about that, why not just go ahead and install mobile casinos and pornographic movie sets on our childrens' school buses? The moment students exit an MCPS building, MCPS staff relinquish all their responsibility, but the danger **\*\*still continues on the school buses.\*\*** My opinion? You insist your kid has an internet-ready smartphone? Then they shouldn't be allowed to ride the bus. **THIS IS ABOUT PROTECTING CHILDREN.** But if a family insists that their child has a smartphone, then you can't use the bus. If phones are allowed on buses, then there needs to be some kind of authority instilled **\*\*on the buses,\*\*** whether it's via cameras, bus attendants, **SOMETHING** because those parents/caregivers are acting irresponsibly and are being inconsiderate of other families and students. If any age of students is using internet-connected devices without any supervising adult present, then the school buses represent a major shortfall/rift/oversight in a county schools **SYSTEM'S** full-scale protection of its student body. Don't count on **\*any\*** of the technology companies to care about this. Negligent parenting only exacerbates it all. It has to be the attentive, caring parents standing up for what's right.

I am a MCPS parent and a family physician seeing children in Montgomery County. I do think that cell phone use during school degrades the learning environment and increases mental health issues for children

I see every day the negative effect of technology on students in my high school English classes. Their attention span is so short, and their phones are just too attractive to ignore. **PLEASE** help us by instituting a bell to bell ban on cell phones for all grades.

Students should continue to be able to continue to have access to their cell phones during lunch for important communication with family.

Cyber bullying in 5th grade.

As a parent I know how hard it can be to singularly enforce rules when they are not consistent across the school or district. Allowing phones out in between classes, at lunch, or in certain classes. Only by being more strict with a "cold turkey" policy can it really be effective. Schools who have banned phones for the entire school day have observed increases in student engagement, in-person student interaction, in library books being checked out for reading, and students report they are happier.

The current MCPS phone policy is not sufficiently different from what was in place before: The burden of enforcing the policy is still on classroom teachers, who are already overburdened. That way the students do not understand that there is a uniform set of expectations about phones being away all day. It makes no sense to have the students take the phones out during lunch or the 5-minute change-over period. Once the phones are out, students find it very difficult to put it away. I am a teacher and a parent. I see at home and at school that students' ability to communicate with each other and build community has declined massively,

so have their writing and reading abilities, their ability to focus, and their mental health. All related to excessive phone use.

My son's high school has tested the pouches in the classroom to stow away phones. However, they are not enforced consistently. And at lunch, there is an overreliance on phones when the students could be socializing with one another.

My kids and I have been personally affected by social media. Despite outreach to the district child welfare agencies, lawyer "advocates", and county institutions, district court, etc. none of the individuals or organizations have done ANYTHING but to take payment for their services. For me this confronts everything I believed and was told about living in this county. My support for these advocacy efforts is personal. It's time to mobilize and take action against a deceptive system for our children.

Less screen time for my two MCPS high school students has always had an immediate impact on their energy, interpersonal engagement and being present to family, friends and community IRL.

I visited a classroom in my son's high school during an open house. It was AP government, and so these were kids who elected to be in a challenging class. Yet right as I walked in there was a table of three students watching TikTok videos on their phones with air pods in. They did that for the entire class while the teacher was teaching, barely engaging in the lesson. I know this is a widespread issue across all our schools!

At my child's high school, kids have access to phones in class even though they are not supposed to. The expectation that high school kids don't have phones in class is applied inconsistently. It's very disheartening. Teachers are either expected to manage the kids phone access on their own; it depends if they are interested or motivated or not. It doesn't make sense to leave this up to the high school teacher. If there were a system in which kids did not have access to their phone bell-to-bell it would make an enormous difference to their education and social lives at school.

My kids do not have phones. During lunch and free times, kids are always on their phones. And they often come home and say they were bored because of no social interaction. It's upsetting that we are trying to do the right thing but will now have to give in. Also, with all the studies out there, I'm not sure why MCPS has not instituted the policy where you store your phones in a safe/locker during the day. DC has done that.

Kids were in a school play assembly and were only looking at their phones :(

I am a mental health therapist and have many teen clients. I am appalled at the way phones and social media are negatively impacting their mental health and ability to connect with others. Schools should not be contributing to this problem.

As more data and research comes out about the harmful impact of social media and how phones enable this (especially for girls), parents can only do so much to limit use and access if strong school policies are not also in place. By having clear boundaries for all K-12 phone use, that helps families to follow through at home and also be consistent across friendship groups. To go alongside this policy, MCPS should also confirm how parents will be communicated with in emergency situations, because that is a primary justification for parents providing devices to reach our kids during school hours.

Our Middle School had fighting almost daily. Students were using cell phones to coordinate the physical attacks by texting the time and hallway in meet to meet. While some were delivering the beating, others were cheering it on while they whipped out their phones to record it only later to be posted to social media. Violence in our schools is like a sport to some. In March a cell phone policy was put in place and the violence has slowed tremendously. I would like to see all children in the state of Maryland benefit the same way from this bell to bell policy!

Read the book *Anxious Generation* - the data provided in that book was enough for me to feel strongly about a phone-free childhood!

My children are recent graduates. They didn't receive cell phones until they entered high school. In middle school, they complained that at lunch every student was on their phone rather than socializing making it very difficult for students to develop socially. Not to mention, students were horribly distracted by their phones in the classroom. In high school, it only got worse. Even though I had a child not interested in social media, they had to have accounts to keep up to date on school activities (honor society, theater, sports, clubs).

Recently a fifth grader showed my first grader something on YouTube while both children were waiting to go back inside after recess. This should have never been allowed to happen. If the older child did not have access to his phone during school, he would not have been able to show my first grade child disturbing content. Phones not only create distraction and more instances of viewing disturbing content but they rob kids of the vital skills of just communicating with each other. You know...like talking or having a conversation. Come on...let's get serious about this before an entire generation loses all ability to communicate effectively and have an attention span beyond 30 seconds.

Want to increase mindfulness and attention and less cyber bullying.

I speak as both as a high school classroom teacher of 17 years and a parent. I have used a phone pouch in my classroom to deter phone use but even with that, it is still such a battle. The students have much shorter attention spans and are eager to jump back on their devices. They are much less present than they used to be. Attention spans are lower and there seems to be less social interaction in general. This needs to change. Kids need to have an opportunity to learn and socialize in a phone free environment for the duration of the school day. We need legislation to back this up.

I am a parent of public school students and a teacher in a private school. My private school instituted a bell-to-bell phone ban in 2024-25. Students are more focused in class and more social during free time because of this ban. I hope all Maryland schools will consider this ban. Phones have no place in the school day.

I work in digital communications and am too aware of the complexities and dangers of kids having access to social media and smart phones.

My daughter is a 9th grader who comes home daily frustrated by classmates and teachers who are on their phones during the school day. Her classmates will prop up their phones against their laptops to hide them and then not listen to the lessons being taught and not be able to participate in group work. Students also spend time on their phones while walking laps during gym, preventing social interactions. The gym teachers at my daughter's school are also on their phones during class.

The research is very clear. Setting an appropriate standard (and reaping the benefits) is worth tolerating any pushback. Parents will continue to choose alternatives if this isn't addressed.

I personally decided to cancel my own social media accounts (i.e., Facebook and Instagram) during COVID due to the amount of misinformation being shared, and sought out more local, independent ways to learn and connect with communities I care about. I would hate to be a hypocrite and require my child to participate in something that I chose to opt out of myself.

I am a retired ESOL teacher. I have seen for myself how distracting phones are for students.

The highly addictive nature of smart phones and social media is very harmful for not only young kids but also tweens and teens. My older kids still get very depressed if they spend time on Instagram. I want to protect my younger kids who are still in middle school from the dangers of smart phones and social media.

I am a 25 year veteran teacher. Over my career, I have seen a dramatic decline in students' problem-solving and critical thinking skills. I attribute much of this decline in part to the

pervasive distraction of smartphones: students' attention is constantly pulled away from the lesson by games, social media, streaming apps, or messaging. When phones are present, teachers are forced to compete — not with another student raising their hand, but with the siren call of entertainment apps, chat threads, and online content. In addition, we have an increase in fights at the school, as many as five in a day (all unrelated). School personnel can't get to the fights in time to break them up because of the swarm of students videotaping the fight. Without phones, there would be no fight videos, students wouldn't be able to contact each other throughout the day to "setup" their fights (locations, times, etc.) and there would be a decrease of trash talk on text during the day.

There is much research to support phone free schools.

As a former college professor (Associate Professor, Villanova University until our move to MD in 2013), I have seen the harmful effects of digital technology, especially phones and social media, on the intellectual, psychological, and social development of my students and their peers. Phones have radically undermined their capacity to pay attention, solve problems, remain aware of their surroundings, read substantial books, and engage in direct, natural conversation. And social media has distorted their sense of what genuine human relationships are, the scope of real friendship, and the proper mode of developing and sustaining authentic bonds across time. Both of these technologies are crippling our children's capacity to become mature adults, capable of taking on difficult responsibilities, like parenthood. The habits or virtues that our children need to develop in the context of their elementary and secondary schooling are being directly undermined by phone and social media use. Our children deserve better.

As a speech language pathologist, I am trained in assessing children based on their language skills, articulation, and pragmatics (social use of language). I have found teenagers to have a harder time using appropriate eye contact because they are so used to looking down at their phones instead of the person they are talking to, even in the absence of an underlying disorder such as autism.

As a parent of a kindergarten child, I want to protect my kid from growing up in a world where a play-based childhood has been replaced by a phone-based one. I don't want their early years shaped by constant comparison, endless scrolling, or the pressure of social media before they're emotionally ready for it. Research shows how early exposure to phones and social platforms can harm attention, sleep, self-esteem, and mental health—and I refuse to let that become my child's normal. But I also know how hard it will be when every other kid seems to have a phone in their pocket and access to social media long before they can handle it. Still, holding this boundary matters. Delaying phones and social media isn't about being strict—it's about giving my child the chance to grow up with imagination, real friendships, confidence, and resilience before stepping into a digital world that can wait.

Texting and social media were a major distraction for my children. Keep them inaccessible during school!

My child's school had some instances of students using social media inappropriately which put other students in danger.

I am a new mom and worried about the environment that my child will grow up in. I'd like him to have a phone-free childhood, and I am worried about schools forcing kids to use technology unnecessarily, and that he'll be surrounded by kids that have smartphones way too early - we have so much research showing how bad this is for learning, literacy, and anxiety. Let's have our kids learn to write, read, and communicate and play!

I was a substitute teacher for the Spring of '25 and phones were a constant battle. I think they can be somewhat useful, but there's no reason they have to have them in each class. Things went much smoother any time the phones were taken away. I am sure that other schools with policies offer best practices, whether they are locked in classrooms or in the office, and parents can just reach out to the office. I know there is initially more work, but in the long run, teachers can do their jobs and students can focus on learning.

I'm personally invested in this. My son has given me reason to be vigilant in making sure he is safe both at school and within the walls of our home from predators online and made my spouse and I hyper-aware that no place online is free from those who would at any given moment exploit my son (who is too young to know better and too smart for his own good regarding technology). I am 100% for everything listed above.

I was a high school math teacher for 10 years. Phones can be a very helpful resource for students. Before students almost all had school devices, the benefits outweighed many on the cons of having phones. Now that almost all schools are one to one with devices, the cons definitely outweigh the pros. Students are so distracted most of the day and it is REALLY hard to have a school phone policy that works where students have access to their phones. That's asking all the teachers to implement it the same which will never happen and creates so many power struggles throughout the day which does not build good relationships. Now I'm a curriculum developer and when I observe at schools with a no phone policy the engagement, collaboration, and culture is wildly better. Face-to-face social skills are something that students need to learn and it's so easy to opt out of that when you have a phone. The no phone policy cannot be one that you ask every teacher to implement individually. It has to be a school wide action that takes that load off of the teachers.

I've been teaching for 24 years. Before our county wide cell phone ban which I was part of making happen, I wanted to quit. I was constantly repeating myself and taught to kids who would rather watch Instagram. Since the ban I've fallen in love with teaching again! The kids are more talkative, they are engaged, they are talking to each other and I have a much higher pass rate and work completion. It's changed everything. I am also a parent of a middle and high

schooler and no phones in schools is better for them. They only get 1 hr of screen time a day and they are really engaging kids in a way many kids are not.

As a college professor in Maryland, it is distressing to hear my students reflect on how much time they spend on personal devices/social media and how it inhibits their learning. Their short attention spans do not come close to the deep level of focus my preschooler brings to his play activities. Parents, educators, and policymakers should work together to make sure K-12 environments support and develop children's natural learning abilities, rather than interfere with them.

My daughters attend an all girls school that changed to fully phone-free this year. I saw how wonderful it was for them/their peers and hope my sons can have the same thing in MCPS

I am so thankful that my son attends a private school where they do not allow cellphones in school. Every child deserves this.

I think the use of pouches for phones would be ideal. They have their phone to and from school but not in school.

I've been a teacher for 18 years and seen the effects of phone addiction on our students. They are disengaged, overstimulated, and unable to socialize with peers. I have also seen and experienced the failure of current policies to protect students and teachers. It puts the burden of policing phones squarely on the teachers and creates impossible classroom management dynamics, as there are no consequences for students who refuse to comply with phone policies. The teachers can't do anything, security can't do anything, and many parents refuse to support teachers in their efforts. All of the research has been clear that phones do not belong in schools, and we are failing our students and teachers by not banning phones in schools.

I am a retired middle school teacher. Phones presented a constant distraction, opportunity for cheating on tests, and were used to instigate fights on and off campus. Students need to focus on their lessons and practice how to build positive relationships with one another.

I am the parent of a 12-year-old 7th grader in Talbot County Public Schools, and I strongly support legislation that places meaningful limits on student smartphone use in school and school-related settings.

Our district's use of Yondr pouches is a step in the right direction, but it is not enough. The pouches are easily bypassed and do not address phone use before school, after school, or on the bus. During those times, nearly every student is on a device. My child has noticed—and been discouraged by—the lack of conversation, connection, and awareness among peers. Children are physically together, but socially and emotionally elsewhere.

As a parent, I have been intentional about delaying a smartphone and limiting unsupervised internet access to support healthy development. Despite those efforts, my child has still been exposed to online content far earlier than intended simply by being surrounded by peers with unrestricted devices. This has left me feeling undermined in my role as a parent. I had hoped to guide conversations around identity, relationships, and values thoughtfully and at developmentally appropriate times. Instead, those moments are increasingly shaped by online content and social pressure beyond my control.

I believe technology can be a valuable learning tool when used intentionally and with clear limits. What is happening now is not intentional use; it is overexposure. Without stronger, enforceable statewide standards, families and schools are left without the structure children need to thrive.

I urge lawmakers to support strong legislation that limits smartphone use in school and school-related settings and strengthens protections around school-issued devices. Our children deserve learning environments that support healthy development, connection, and wellbeing. Thank you for your time and consideration.

In my daughter's middle school students are supposed to keep PMDs in their lockers all day, yet I have seen texts from friends on her at-home device with photos of kids at school, posing in the bathroom mirror. I especially don't think it's appropriate for kids to be taking selfies or any photos in the bathroom.

My son is in 8th grade, and I really appreciate the "away all day" policy his school has to try to keep him focused. This policy doesn't apply in high school currently, and as he already struggles to focus on school priorities over friends, I'm worried about the impact of the distraction come next year.

Teachers don't want phones in school. Parents don't want them. Even kids say they would prefer not to have them, but can't be the only one without. It's a collective action trap that requires a policy response.

I have seen phones distracting my nieces who are currently on night school. They are both highly committed to education but find it hard to disconnect from their devices during class. The negative impact is obvious

Excess use causes eye strain and may cause permanent damage.

I'm a HS library media specialist in HCPSS and I see the negative effects of social media every day. Not only are students distracted and not engaged in class, their mental health and the ability to interact socially has suffered. Now that usage of generative AI has exploded amongst our students, issues with plagiarism and academic dishonesty is at an all time high.

Studies are showing that AI usage is even more dangerous to our students' wellbeing and exceptionally damaging to critical thinking skills. Schools need to be phone and AI free.

I'm a teacher of 24 years. Smartphones ruined our kids. The failure to restrict their usage ruined learning and my job. I worked with our BOE, testified and organized and educated parents. We got Howard County to go bell to bell phone free. The kids are talking to each other, to me and I love my job again. Less anxiety and depression. Higher grades and deeper learning. It's so great. Please do the research, look closely at the mental health data. Talk to teachers. Longitudinally, we will look back at the SmartPhones allowed in class like I look back on the 1990s when kids were allowed to smoke at school. It's just unhealthy and we will live to regret it. Listen to the teachers.

Having administrators collect phones throughout the day is not sustainable; they have other work to do. Students use their phones in the hallways between classes and in the restrooms, sometimes contributing to situations that later involve school discipline steps.

The alarming increase and prevalence of mental health crisis, loneliness, and social dysfunction is abundant. This is a public health crisis. Maryland is one of the last states to take action to protect our children. It is time to correct this. Please support bell to bell legislation, with devices stored securely away and no more social media as a means to communicate. Let's look at the data around Ed Tech and consider paying teachers more, and unproven tech companies less.

At our middle school we made a concerted effort by all teachers to enforce our rule against cell phones during the school day. This includes earbuds and headphones since they are connected to the phones. We were buoyed by nearby areas like the state of Virginia which outlawed phones in school. It was only when we acted together that we were able to make a difference in reducing the use of phones in school. Single teachers acting alone would receive pushback from kids and angry reactions.

I am not going into depth about the impact of phones/social media on children as I think that is already well established. I also don't feel the need to expound upon discipline issues we have had with students negatively interacting with each other and accessing inappropriate content. Again, at this point, these issues seem too common in all schools to try to have to testify to these occurrences.

If you can't acknowledge this issue is DESTROYING today's youth, you need a very loud wake-up call. We shouldn't have to beg you to help protect our kids. I wish I could say that my kids would put their phones away on their own, but they are addicted and are teens, so they won't. They need the support of the system to prevent them from having their phones during the school day.

I am a parent and a teacher. When my son was in first grade and issued a school Chromebook, it became an enormous distraction. So much so that, instead of correctly taking the regular

testing, he would click through random answers so he could play a game on his Chromebook. His first grade teacher had no idea of his reading or math abilities outside of the test data, which was inaccurate. Now, he's in 5th grade and often comes home reporting that his friends are using their cell phones during school and recess. It's another distraction and source of conflict in our house because we have no intention of getting him a phone anytime soon.

I'm a teacher in a private school that has banned phones for the past two years. The improvement in student focus and engagement is noticeable now that phones are not present. I'm extremely grateful that I'm no longer competing with the entire internet for my students' attention, and I'm delighted to see them engaging in real ways with their peers.

As a parent of three Maryland kids, this legislation is so important to me in terms of their safety, learning, growth, and socialization. These policies reflect the best available science, and are grounded in family values.

We need phones for emergencies but enforcement that they are turned off in school.

My middle schooler says he spends his lunch watching his friends play video games on their phones. He doesn't have a phone (because really, most kids do not have a real need for a phone) and is angry that his friends get to play games while he doesn't. There isn't much socializing going on because of the screens. I understand kids also sneak to use their phones in class, and request additional bathroom breaks to use their phones in there. These are completely unnecessary distractions that we can easily eliminate by restricting phone use during the entire school day. The phones need to be PHYSICALLY restricted, or kids will still use them - asking kids to just turn them off or leave them in their backpacks is not enough.

Last year when chromebook distribution was delayed, teachers encouraged students to use smartphone use by students. My daughter doesn't have a smart phone and was therefore bullied by classmates and couldn't take part in assignments. If schools are to rely on devices they need to have school issued appropriate technology and not rely on personal devices. Phones are a complete distraction. Even as adults we have a hard time putting them down. And kids /youth have even less self control.

My kindergartner is coming home telling me how much screen time is being used during instructional time, I don't want phones added on as more of a distraction.

### **Testimonials in Support of Less Ed Tech & Chromebooks**

Kids are still able to get on YouTube and other sites- they are a dangerous distraction & make it harder to concentrate on actual school. I wish less homework was on computer as well.

I know there are students who like to scroll for short videos and spend unreasonable amount of time on video games, which causes missing school assignments and make it hard to keep up with grades.

My daughter has no phone or access to internet/social media at home from us BUT she does through her school computer unfortunately so she watches Youtube, goes on Amazon and other social platforms without us knowing about it through her school computer. It is horrible. We take the computer away at night but wish that none of this was accessible in Middle School. There is NO need for her to have unlimited access to internet because of school computer.

As a teacher in DC public schools, I have seen first hand the accelerating harms of smartphones and social media and the transformative effects of the bell to bell device ban that went into effect in September of 2025. As a parent, I am horrified by the way in which MCPS has allowed screen time to take over our kids' lives and educations through the reliance on Chromebooks with (as every student and parent knows) completely inadequate lockdown technology; social media for communication about extracurriculars; toothless policies about phone use in class; and zero policies on phone use outside of class. I know addressing the Chromebook issue is beyond the scope of this current initiative, but I believe that its other provisions will make a big difference. One more point: this is a huge equity issue. I know how much time it takes to manage my kids' screen time, and I see that the overworked and resource-strapped parents of students at my high-poverty school do not have that kind of time to give. We are facing a new digital divide, with only the highest resource parents able to protect their children's developing brains from intentionally addictive technologies that are making fortunes for the elite (many of whom spend a little bit of that fortune sending their kids to screen-free private schools ). Policies like the ones proposed by Distraction Free Schools Maryland are the least that our schools can do to lessen that gap.

We do not use tablets at home, do not think it's good for the attention span, but then wonder how frequently the kids are getting tablet breaks and TV breaks at school, especially for things like indoor recess because it rained the night before and is damp outside.

Post Covid our schools have not only relied but leaned extremely heavily on technology that was used during the pandemic, but then never retracted. While I am in favor of removing cell phones from in the classroom, I would especially like to see teachers and staff to stop assuming all kids have or need a cellphone and communicate with the kids through them. Assignments and class discussions require that a cellphone is needed or a student is often ostracized or shamed by staff. Two of my kids have been shamed for having phones that are just phones rather than smartphones, which I find completely unsupportive of a family trying to save money and save our kids from unnecessary screentime that is proven to be unhealthy for them.

I would also like to see Chromebooks removed as well or at least kept IN the classroom. The expense to families of damaged or broken laptops, because children are required to bring them home each day, is prohibitive. The strife, frustration and trust in my own household has suffered greatly due to the sneaking of time on the computers that is for non-homework related activities. Trying to keep our kids' screen time limited and our home network safe is a daily struggle and basically futile. School computers insecurely store our network passwords, even when they are locked down with securely managed profiles. New chromebooks (loaners) that are brought

home, unbeknownst to us, bypass the kid profile connecting instead to the default parent profile. It is a vicious cycle that puts great onus on the parents that is easily avoidable by the district.

We have watched our kids' interest in school diminish greatly since Covid due to the heavy reliance and mandated participation in the use of phones and Chromebooks in the classroom for instruction. Our kids are craving paper assignments, group discussions, library research and instructors that are actually reading and grading their work, rather than using AI. Our kids have expressed a disinterest because their teachers are so obviously disinterested. We have heard, "If they aren't even willing to read my paper themselves, why should I care about putting in the effort?" This is the total lack of connection we are creating as a culture and educational system and why we are completely failing our kids. LACK OF CONNECTION.

I went to my child's school for an observation day and was stunned at how many of the 6th graders were doing other activities in their chrome books while the teacher was trying to teach. My wife noticed the same behavior at the high school

The students are always 1 step ahead of any rules/regulation. They are using VPNs to circumvent firewall and Wifi restrictions. They are hacking chromebooks to play games. We must become more strict with rules in order to remove the options for them to play into the game developers tactics. Not the kids fault, but we need to support them by removing the options.

My experience as a support staff teacher in a county middle school provided me with more observations than I have time to share. Basically, I have seen the deterioration of learning occur, stressors unnecessarily added to students, degradation of social interactions between young people...adults not knowing all the places students can and will go to access what their peers are doing. Check to see if your child can and does access a private site set up by students, where you have to be given permission to join. Many, not all, will have subjects that can make students uncomfortable. I never accessed them myself, kids came to me to show me what they could access. Not all of it is fun.

My boys are at Woodlin and have been given the chrome books to use and school and take home. It is a huge distraction and they constantly battle to go on them to play games. I wish that they didn't have them, and the school didn't feel the need to use them as teaching tools. I'm fine with them learning the 'analog' way with paper and notebooks. Appreciate the teachers for all they do.

During the "reading rotation" section of my son's third grade class, at Chevy Chase Elementary, students are offered Chromebooks to use if they would prefer to "read online" rather than reading books to themselves. The online graphic novel books that most of them choose to watch are akin to watching movies. It doesn't take rocket science or expensive literacy studies to find out how to raise our students' plummeting literacy rates. Just take the chromebooks out of the classroom, and have them read real books, and write responses with pencil and paper (rather than clicking on multiple choice tests on screens.)

Elementary school students at my son's school used Google Slides on MCPS Chromebooks to share YouTube links and other online content (like their own internet). Parents could not see any of this activity because we don't have MCPS email accounts but older MCPS students could join. Led to sharing among students of inappropriate content (sexual, racist) from the internet pasted on the slides, which younger children (eg K-3rd graders) saw because these 5th graders were opening them up while sitting on MCPS buses and using MCPS internet (it was required for students to take their Chromebook home; MCPS filters don't catch everything). Please note the Principal took appropriate action when this was reported. The point is that schools need to reduce students' access and use of tech (store Chromebooks at school!!), and make sure use of internet resources is restricted and monitored, and parents should have access to all online spaces that students have access to from the school. Since YouTube is super dangerous, schools should avoid sending kids onto YouTube, because from there they can go (almost) anywhere.

There are too many platforms for assignments, and I'm not confident they are actually effective. My 6th grader has cried several times while trying to do something on the computer, when it has nothing to do with her understanding of the work.

I have observed from own children (ages 8-10), when they get off their tablets after being in it for more than 1 hour, they are emotionally dysregulated. They may bounce off the walls, they may whine but when tablets are not provided the entire week, they're able to regulate themselves, not bounce off the walls and talk to each other and find things to play. Teaching in an elementary public school, I see how challenging it is for teachers to get their students' attention and engagement because many of the students are at home transfixed on their devices for numerous hours.

In addition to my elementary school aged children, I have a middle schooler. 2 years in and he only carries his lunchbox and a Chromebook to and from school. They do not use handheld books, rather a device the ENTIRE day! His eyes are frequently twitching because he is viewing the screen everyday, his thoughts are always jumping, he has multiple tabs open despite being told by us to close the tabs when in class and focus on teacher instruction. It's like the device is crack for his young developing mind and he can't just delete the tabs. It's so frustrating because our tax payers dollars are funding this habit! Something has to change!

My elementary aged child has been allowed to use school computers to access inappropriate content in the classroom that we would never let him watch at home. We have also observed that the overuse of tech in the classroom has been a major distraction and exacerbates his attention challenges. My child's academic motivation and performance is night-and-day depending on whether his teacher limits tech and enforces strict boundaries, but that is very difficult for individual teachers. We need to have better system-wide standards. EdTech is ruining a generation.

I read the following article in today's NY Times and the data presented are very concerning. We have two grandchildren at Wood Acres Elementary.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/16/opinion/laptop-classroom-test-scores.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare>

I am a grandparent of Maryland elementary school students, and note that even some graduate and law school professors are banning computers in their classroom and are requiring hand written note-taking and examinations, to avoid serious distraction and learning impairment. All the more so for grades K-12. Thank you for your consideration.

During kindergarten, my child shared how her teacher would show YouTube videos that animated and narrated books. It concerned me that her teacher was not reading books directly and that my child was associating reading with watching videos.

My 3rd and 5th graders told me they could access youtube during school. They were very ashamed to tell me they did. They said it was really hard to resist the temptation and everyone was doing it. Now every day when they get home we have a chat and discuss how well / if they were able to resist the temptation of playing a game or glancing at YouTube. I am FURIOUS that it is put on them to make that decision to resist screen distractions multiple times a day IN SCHOOL. We know how hard it is. They are good obedient kids but they shouldn't have to face this constant opportunity. It is exhausting. And also : how come the teacher or the teacher's aides don't have punishment in place?? I can't believe they don't notice what is going on.

My children report obvious cheating in all academic classes by kids with watches and phones, as well as inappropriate use of AI, and they express frustration with the prospect that a large swath of their peers are simply going to "cheat their way through high school, college, work... where does it end?" Digital devices are demonstrably inhibiting kids' ability to learn how to concentrate, read and think critically and deeply, have original thoughts. Yes we need to use the tools at our disposal, but I would argue tools like AI have no place in an educational environment where students have not yet fully developed critical thinking skills. One anecdotal example: for the annual history fair project - I have an older child who completed the project at a public school in a different state's largest urban school district. He was required to make an appointment at the city library, come up with questions about primary source material the librarian could then help him locate and use in his project. He had to think critically, interact with an actual person, review actual photographs and first-person accounts on a historical topic. In contrast, my 7th grader in MCPS was given a website with a few sources, mostly children's digital encyclopedias. She clearly does not understand how to formulate a thesis or research a topic. She has not been taught how to write a thoughtful prompt for the technology and "garbage in garbage out" these tools provided by the school are trash. She even told me "Don't buy me a real book, I can't use a real book because I can't cite that." It's nice that the kids save a few minutes with a tool that generates citations for them but really. They need to do some things by hand at least once to understand concepts.

School is also a place where kids learn social skills through their day to day interactions and the use of digital devices steals those moments away from kids. Over the course of 7 years of middle and high school, all those stolen moments of attention, interaction, contemplation add up

and eventually we have a vaguely unhappy, incompetent and anti-social generation who cannot adapt as well to change.

Please, get the digital devices OUT of schools, teach the kids how to properly read, and let them socialize with each other face to face. Our future selves will thank you!

Tech in schools is distracting. Kids learn much better with textbooks, paper and pencil.

I am very much in favor of phone free schools. They are a huge distraction and prevent kids from being kids! Also, I was shocked when the computer that my daughter brought home had unrestricted access to the internet. There needs to be much more oversight on tech in schools and I very much support implementing clear and strict limits on tech use.

My son was extremely excited to enter 3rd grade last year. However as the first few weeks and months passed his excitement and enthusiasm for learning disappeared and was replaced with apathy and moodiness. As I asked him about his classes it became apparent that he was spending much of his time in class on his chromebook. This is how he did many of his lessons. When I finally decided to check in with the teacher she claimed my son was spending most of his time playing video games or listening to music instead of doing his work. This was her explanation as to why he wasn't doing well or feeling challenged. I told her that I would talk to him about it, but I also mentioned that distractions such as video games are highly addictive, and that they are built to be stronger than us.

I asked my friends and neighbors, why did he even have access to these distractions on his chromebook? This seemed so obviously problematic to me and I wondered if I should contact the principal. But the response I got from every parent was 'just wait until he hits middle school, it is even worse then'.

We made it through third grade, and now in fourth grade, my son is thriving. The difference was obvious within the first week. He came home raving about his teachers, telling me everything he is learning, wanting to do extra projects with my help. He is happy and motivated again. This year, at the school open house, what I saw in his classroom was dramatically different. No students were using chromebooks. They were interacting with the teacher, engaged with each other and their work. When I had a parent teacher conference the teacher mentioned that every year, the kids have had a harder time paying attention and engaging. She is now using paper and pencil for most daily activities.

I am not saying that there is not a place for technology. We live in a technological world and that is not going to change. But the effects of digital distractions are profound. They negatively impact focus, productivity, mental health and social skills. And the research backs this up. There truly is no controversy. We must be so much more vigilant when it comes to what is available on their chromebooks in the classroom. And no phones is, well, a no brainer. Schools that have implemented this policy have had extremely positive results.

And it should be common knowledge that these distractions are built to be stronger than our will power. I mentioned to a friend that it is like introducing kids to cocaine, then leaving it on their desk while they are in class, and then blaming them for doing drugs instead of applying themselves to their work.

I do think this is one of the great challenges of our time, and I hope that schools and policy makers will act aggressively to promote what is best for students, teachers and parents. Teams who help with technology in the schools must be made aware of what students can access on school sanctioned devices like chromebooks and work with school staff and students to prioritize a healthy learning environment. (Often there is a hack or workaround to find things like video games or tv shows or music, but by third grade my son had easily figured these out, so presumably experts should be able to do so as well).

Tech companies have one goal, profit. What is best for humans has nothing to do with it. We must create legislation and implement technology in schools with this understanding.

My children are completely distracted by devices including computers at school and social media has caused them emotional and educational damage. I fully support all of these remedies.

My high schooler talks about schoolmates watching sports and playing games for entire class periods. She says it makes everyone feel demoralized and unmotivated to try and engage. Teachers can't watch everyone all the time and don't need the extra job of phone police. I also have middle and elementary school children.

Screens make learning in school extremely difficult for my sons. They are a constant distraction and temptation. On top of that, they also limit socialization and in-person communication. They make cheating easy and tempting.

My daughter has expressed multiple times that during educational periods, there are students who have managed to circumvent the firewalls and site blockers and have accessed both adult porn but sadly child porn and have been playing it on their school provided device (11th grade). Additionally, art teachers have required her to obtain a social media account so that she could participate in an assignment only for that assignment to sit ungraded for weeks. Finally, teachers have not been following the BCPS required grading time frame and her submitted assignments will go completely ungraded until the end of the grading period which is not fair to her as she is a Tri-M student with a 504 Plan. This plan requires teachers to give her extra time to complete assignments but many times, the online system will lock and the teacher will not reopen the assignment for her, resulting in either a failing grade or a missed assignment that she cannot do anything about. It is time to bring back traditional grading systems and standards as it is clear that the electronic devices are being used as a crutch and an excuse for poor classroom management.

Attending the open house at my middle schooler's public school, I saw widespread non-academic use of the school-issued laptops during class. At home, my own kids were wasting huge amounts of time on the internet on their school-issued Chromebooks when they were supposed to be doing homework. Now, I sit directly next to them at the same table when they are doing homework to make sure they stay on task. This is a waste of my time and contrary to my desire for them to become independent, but I have no other way to be sure they are staying on task. I'm sure other parents don't have the luxury of sitting there with their kids. It's outrageous that the school district puts these distractions into our kids' hands and there is nothing a parent can do about it. I think the distractions are being reflected in worse educational outcomes and test scores. I deeply regret that this natural experiment happened during my children's school years. I think they have been poorly served by MCPS's chromebook policy.

My child is in elementary school so we don't have issues with phones yet. The main issue I have is with the smartboards in classrooms and with the children using laptops to play games. The smartboards make it so easy for the teachers to play YouTube clips for the kids, which I have seen time and again as a classroom volunteer. These aren't premium ad-free paid YouTube accounts either, so the kids are sitting through ads. Other teachers just put on movies since the screen is so accessible. My daughter watched 10 different Disney movies throughout first grade, which doubled the amount of movies she had ever seen in her life up to that point. The "learning games" on laptops are nothing but a waste of time. Young children should be learning with tactile items and by working with their hands using pencil and paper.

I teach critical media studies at college, and when my daughter started kindergarten, I was shocked to realize how deeply the tech industry I teach my students to question has been embedded in public education — from daily use of Chromebooks at age 5 (which made school very difficult for my daughter) to ClassDojo playing on parental anxieties to sell paid memberships.

There are so many known detriments and harms to children with use of social media and gaming that keeping it off during school hours seems like the very least we can do to protect our children and set them up for success in years to come. I have an one year old and I'm already keenly interested and hope you can pass these common sense reforms.

My first grader struggled to connect with other students in his class because they spend so much time on these online programs that gamify "learning." The kids are incentivized to complete these lessons so they get free time on their devices. Meanwhile, their lunch and recess are super short. Luckily, the device is no longer sent home. With our older child, we were pressured to have him work on these sites even at home.

I noticed when kids do assignments using computers, they lose focus faster compared to paper based assignments, especially in math.

My kids are in elementary school. I am very well researched on this topic and therefore we are a very low tech family. I advocated for the cell phone policy in Howard County. I was recently

personally impacted by the use of edtech in first grade, something that I had previously met with our principle about before this incident. The incident - My son, who plays zero interactive tech games at home, became obsessed with “boost” reading technology that is “made available” during “read to self” time. Rather than requiring all students spend time actually reading, he was given the option to get on a Chromebook to play “reading” games on “boost”. For two straight weeks he woke up talking about his score and came home talking about how he advanced - nonstop. My son is 6 and is reading Harry Potter on his own. Not only was this technology not helping him learn to read but it was addictive and therefore harmful to him. The teacher agreed to stop him from using it resulting in an outburst at school. I will fight this fight every year with each new teacher. Interactive games have not been proven to help students learn but there is mounting research on the harms. I can only imagine the harm done to an already tech-addicted child being further flooded with dopamine. Pair this with the harms of no ad blocking, inappropriate internet access, and privacy concerns, and it is evident elementary schools do not need personal device use at all. Desktops in a tech class would suffice. I’m researching low tech private schools due to the incompetency of the public schools in dealing with this issue. I recently reached out to Howard County delegates about the AI task force that is underway. It’s extremely concerning that there aren’t any child development experts on the committee and I received zero responses.

I have a million stories of my children and their friends who are unable to escape the screens. There are countless lost opportunities for them to be creative, solve their own problems, etc. that are zapped when they turn to a screen to "solve boredom." This is an epidemic. PLease help us keep kids off of screens.

Kids are using Canva to chat, can get on youtube

I see how creative my daughter is and how much she learns without a device, including chrome book learning. She’s better able to self regulate as well.

I’ve been teaching elementary since 2011 and have witnessed the decline in students’ focus and stamina. They can’t sit still for more than 5 minutes and are always seeking stimulation. It’s very challenging to keep students engaged.

While it is important to limit access to screens at schools, there needs to be a bigger push on cutting back on device use (often unsupervised) at home. Parents should supervise and be aware of what their child is engaging in on their personal devices. They should be monitoring sites children are using and limiting screen time. Through the constant overstimulation, children don’t know how to be bored. They aren’t learning how to creatively problem solve, or stay with a difficult skill through mastery. When everything is spoon fed and at their finger tips, we’re robbing these kids of learning how to navigate the world without a screen in their face.

Schools should absolutely be sure that learning websites are in alignment with developmental goals. Districts should be blocking harmful websites on student devices. Kids are savvy and will

often find a work around. It's imperative that districts keep up with this and figure out how to prevent students from accessing inappropriate content. Certain search topics should be blocked. There is so much to undo here. We can use technology to help kids learn but there need to be strict parameters.

This is likely the most important, impactful, and urgent change to current educational system that needs to happen right now. Our children are the most valuable resource for our country and our future and need to be maximally protected from the harm of social media and smartphones.

I've seen everything from accessing YouTube through docs, to using Chromebooks to look up non-age appropriate content that normal restrictions do not catch (the use of language that isn't flagged, and still accesses what should be restricted).

I often hear my son tell me that he's on his laptop a lot. Also, when he was in kindergarten he was able to navigate to YouTube through a school approved application. To me that is unacceptable

Pre K students do not need laptops to learn. This deeply concerns me.

I have witnessed the teachers using screens to "read" the story to the students instead of a using a book.

My 12 yo does not have a phone but she has a watch that we tightly control (who can contact her, no camera and no apps/internet)... however, thanks to school, she has her computer home every evening and uses it to access youtube all the time (via google sheets).. We take her computer in our room from 9PM onwards but I wish she didn't have access to any of this. Sadly it is beyond my control unless school can control better. (ok to share this but without my name)

My elementary school child informed me that kids were accessing the adult role-playing game "Bit-Life" from school devices during school hours, including experiencing "dating" someone through the game. The game has sexual content and this was disturbing.

Over-use of Chromebooks. Personal devices are available to students in primary grades.

I am also concerned about the lack of safeguards on school-issued devices. My child has been encouraged to use AI chat platforms and has been able to access adult social media spaces using her school iPad. The absence of clear limits has led to behaviors that are now common for many families: choosing screens over books, devices over outdoor play, and staying up late on a device after sneaking it into her bedroom. These are not discipline issues or parenting failures—they are predictable outcomes when children are given constant access to highly stimulating technology without adequate boundaries. From a child development perspective, this level of exposure places unrealistic expectations on young people to self-regulate in environments that are not designed with their neurological, emotional, or social development in

mind. Schools should be spaces that support focus, connection, and psychological safety—not places where children must constantly manage digital distraction.

I have seen how much it has helped that HCPS has stopped using phones during school. Unfortunately the chrome books are not safe and kids are frequently distracted playing games or doing anything other than learning.

My sons Teacher's are repeatedly telling me he is rushing through school work so he can play games on his school issued Chromebook. Screens are HIGHLY addictive and should be much more limited in schools especially before high school.

Too many children appear addicted to these devices. The minute they are taken away, many become hysterical and irrational. It's not healthy and I've wondered about some children who have had delayed speech with no clear reason. Children need to be protected at all costs. It's the adults responsibility to educate themselves, their children and act on the behalf of every child.

New research indicates that screens, and social media in particular, is harmful to children and adolescents' brain development in multiple ways. As the Washington Post reported, "high levels of screen use are linked to measurable declines in cognitive performance — slower processing speed, reduced attention and weaker memory. Rates of depression and anxiety climb steadily with heavier social media engagement. Sleep quality deteriorates as screens encroach later into the night, and researchers are finding troubling associations between screen habits and rising adolescent weight gain." Schools should be a place that improves our kids' cognitive abilities, not one that weakens them.

Unclear how using "Drift Boss" as a tool to 'learn' mathematics in 3rd grade classroom enriches learning.

Kids are using devices to watch other people live their lives vs. living their own lives. Siri is being asked to answer questions vs students doing their own thinking. We don't need smart phones in schools.

I know the research of significant learning decline since we introduced 1:1 devices to be used as part of instruction. I know the research of the harmful impact on attention having a phone, even when turned over and put to the side, has on attention. I know the research that explains the harmful impact of digital culture on reading behaviors.

Both of my children are in 6th grade. Earlier this year, both were failing every class due to computer use in the classroom. They were accessing games, watching YouTube videos, and completely ignoring their teachers. Once we had the school counselor take away the computers, their grades went to straight A's and B's. These devices and access to addictive content do not belong in our classrooms. Full stop.

I am a parent and a teacher. When my son was in first grade and issued a school Chromebook, it became an enormous distraction. So much so that, instead of correctly taking the regular testing, he would click through random answers so he could play a game on his Chromebook. His first grade teacher had no idea of his reading or math abilities outside of the test data, which was inaccurate. Now, he's in 5th grade and often comes home reporting that his friends are using their cell phones during school and recess. It's another distraction and source of conflict in our house because we have no intention of getting him a phone anytime soon.

The benefit of screens in classrooms is limited and questionable. The downsides are clear.

Of all the classes my son assists, only one it's mainly paper based and that's not enough. We parents made it through school without all these screens, so our experience shows that is doable.

I just received my 6th grader's quarter 2 IEP updates. It stood out to me that on just about every goal and objective, the school team noted my child's pull to digital distraction on his school issued Chromebook as a barrier to progress. He does use assistive technology so needs the device for some of his class work but this feedback made me wonder about his access to non-school related apps and content that are getting in the way of his education.

I would prefer they don't use chrome books or if they must in very limited and monitored ways. My kid has more unsupervised computer time at school than he does at home and there isn't anything I can do about it.

Gaming websites should be inaccessible during the school hours.

My kindergartner is coming home telling me how much screen time is being used during instructional time, I don't want phones added on as more of a distraction.

\*\*\* Updated 2/16/26 5:00 PM \*\*\*