

Written Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 928, the Maryland Phone-Free Schools Act House Ways & Means Committee | April 1, 2026

Dear Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and members of the Ways & Means Committee,

My name is Erin Mathis. I am a parent of a kindergartener at Kensington Parkwood Elementary School in Montgomery County, a member of the Parkwood Elementary PTA, and a child psychologist. **I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 928 and to urge you to keep the Senate version of this bill intact.**

As a child psychologist, I see firsthand the impact that personal devices have on children's developing brains — on their ability to focus, regulate their emotions, and engage meaningfully with the world around them. The research is clear: these devices are designed to be addictive, and children's brains are particularly vulnerable to that pull. Removing them from the school day is not a radical idea — it is a developmentally sound and evidence-based one.

As a parent, I am also deeply aware of how difficult it is to advocate for change within a school system. That is why the strength of this bill matters so much. A weak bill does not just fail to solve the problem — it makes the problem harder to fix, because it signals to school districts that personal devices have a legitimate place in instruction. They do not.

I am writing to ask the committee to do two specific things:

1. Keep the Senate version and strike the instructional use exception entirely. The House version adds language allowing students to use personal devices when directed by an instructor. This exception is unnecessary — there is no instructional purpose that requires a student's personal device. Schools have and can provide the tools students need. More importantly, this exception significantly undermines the bill's purpose. If the law suggests personal devices may be needed for learning, school districts will have little incentive to invest in strong storage solutions, and teachers will remain stuck policing phones instead of teaching.

2. Restore the original definition of "store." Both chambers weakened this definition, but the way devices are stored matters enormously. As MSDE has testified, a "no show" policy is the least effective approach and ranks lowest in teacher satisfaction. Strong, consistent storage solutions are what actually remove devices from the learning environment. Weakening this definition undermines everything else the bill is trying to accomplish.

Maryland has an opportunity to pass meaningful, effective legislation that protects students and supports teachers. I urge you to ensure that the version that becomes law is the strongest version possible — not one that has been quietly hollowed out before it even takes effect.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



Erin Mathis, Ph.D.

Kensington, Maryland Parent | Parkwood Elementary PTA Member | Child Psychologist