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BILL: HB 755

TITLE: County Boards of Education - Student Personal Electronic Device Use Policy - Establishment (Phones Away for the School Day Act)

DATE: February 18, 2026

POSITION: Unfavorable

COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means Committee

CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **opposes** House Bill 755.

This bill requires each local board of education to develop and implement, by the 2026-2027 school year, a policy to prohibit the use of cellular phones during all the hours of the school day from start to finish. The policy must also require students to store their phones in a secure place during instructional time so that it is not on their person. The policy may not prohibit a student from using a phone for any purpose documented in the student's individualized education program or Section 504 Plan. Schools must also establish disciplinary measures for violations, excluding suspension or expulsion solely for violation of the policy. HB 755 directs schools to designate one or more telephones in the school to be used by students to contact a student's parent or legal guardian or other responsible adult during school day hours if necessary. The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

Maryland superintendents appreciate the good intentions of this bill; however, PSSAM steadfastly opposes any legislation that imposes statewide mandates on local school systems or local boards of education, especially on policies that have previously been deliberated at the local level with all affected stakeholders, such as the case regarding student uses of cell phones.

In the past several years, superintendents, school boards and advisory groups in every Local Education Agencies (LEAs) have taken proactive action to establish, update, or study district-wide cell phone policies. These efforts include establishing new policies specific to the use of cell phones, updating board policies, revising the district's code of conduct or student

handbook regarding the use of technology to include cell phones or “smart” technology, and/or introducing pilot programs. Much of the local work in establishing these policies was aided through surveys to parents, teachers, and students, as well as extensive public meetings.

In addition, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) convened a broad workgroup of stakeholders in 2025, including several superintendents, to study this issue. We strongly supported this workgroup and its on-the-ground membership. The workgroup anchored its work in national research and partnered with Phones in Focus who have initiated a national study based on educator input regarding best practices around the country. More importantly, the workgroup used the experiences of the local school districts who have already delved deep in their communities to determine the appropriate use of cell phones and “smart technology” in classrooms and schools.

PSSAM remains committed to focusing on empowering local decision-making to ensure education policies that are relevant, flexible, and reflective of the unique needs of each community. Again, we appreciate the bill’s good intentions, but ask the Legislature to allow the education experts at the state and local level to enact and enforce the most effective public policies.

For these reasons, PSSAM **opposes** House Bill 755 and kindly requests an **unfavorable** report.