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**BILL:** Senate Bill 928  
**TITLE:** County Boards of Education - Student Electronic Communication Device Use Policy - Establishment (Maryland Phone-Free Schools Act)  
**HEARING DATE:** April 1, 2026  
**POSITION:** UNFAVORABLE  
**COMMITTEE:** Ways and Means  
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the State's local boards of education, **opposes Senate Bill 928 - County Boards of Education - Student Electronic Communication Device Use Policy - Establishment (Maryland Phone-Free Schools Act).**

Senate Bill 928 requires that each county board must develop and implement a policy to *prohibit* the use of electronic communication devices by students during the academic school day (bell to bell). Previously, Senate Bill 928 limited use in most situations, however, the amended language now removes exceptions for emergencies and situations when an administrator directs students to use the device for educational purposes. The amended language also removes reference to the use of restorative disciplinary measures.

### **Senate Bill 928's Strict Prohibition on Electronic Communication Devices Ignores Local Context, MSBE Resolution 25-02, & MSDE Guidance**

While MABE appreciates the intent of the bill to improve conditions for teaching and learning, MABE believes that the decision on whether and how to adopt such a policy should be the responsibility of each local board of education. MABE believes that legislation which limits local board decision-making authority (like prescribing whether to have, or the content of, a student technology use policy) weakens the county board's bond with the local community and adversely impacts the community's participation in the governance and operation of their local school system.

As noted in MSDE's testimony on SB 928 in the Senate, the Maryland State Board of Education supports all local school systems having a cell phone use policy. However, [Resolution 25-02 Promoting Equitable and Effective Student Cell Phone Use Policies in Maryland Public Schools](#), does not go so far as to prohibit the use of cell phones. Rather, MSDE leaves the content of the policy up to each local school system.

MABE supports efforts to limit distractions due to personal electronic devices during instructional hours. However, MABE opposes the prescriptive approach in SB 928 that prohibits all use of personal communication devices aside from limited exceptions related to IEPs/504 Plans, documented health issues, language translation tools for multi-lingual learners, or approved caregiving responsibilities. In fact, this prescriptive approach with very limited exceptions is counter to the [Implementation Guidance and Resources for Support](#) that resulted from the Task Force on Cell Phone Use in Schools. This guidance was developed in collaboration with a diverse group of educators, school leaders, superintendents, field experts, students and parents. As noted in the Task Force’s guidance, “Maryland school districts, in partnership with their families, educators, and students, have the expertise to develop policies limiting students’ use of cell phones during the school day. **The Task Force on Cell Phone Use in Schools will not mandate what kind of policy a district should implement. The task force recommendation instead prioritizes flexibility for each district to design a policy that is tailored to their unique context** and reflects the insights and engagement of its own educators, families, and students.”

A 2025 Department of Legislative Services (DLS) [Issue Paper](#) states, “According to the Maryland State Department of Education, 19 [local school systems] recently updated their cell phone policies, and the remaining 5 LSS are currently reviewing or updating their policies.” The same report notes that “while the concerns about the impacts of student cell phone use in schools on student learning, behavior, and mental health are compelling, **the effectiveness of new laws and policies restricting their use remains uncertain... Fifty-six percent of parents believed students should be allowed to use their cell phones in schools, even during class time if approved by the teacher. Only 32% of parents support a total cell phone ban in school, even if the policy has exceptions for health or student support purposes.**” SB 928’s strict prohibition on cell phones runs counter to this parental feedback.

### **Code of Conduct & Disciplinary Policy Considerations**

While MABE supports tiered disciplinary measures for violations of a school’s policy, SB 928 intrudes on local school system and school board’s ability to develop a specific code of conduct tailored to the needs of its community. Therefore, MABE recommends at least removing the language in 7-137(f)(3).

### **Storage Considerations**

Additionally, SB 928's mandate that students store their personal electronic devices during school day hours would potentially mean that school systems would have to purchase storage lockers, cabinets, and/or pouches for this purpose. Yet, there is no funding source attached to SB 928. School budgets are stretched thin, and as noted, most already have a cell phone policy in place. It is unnecessary to legislate a statewide, uniform school cell phone policy.

### **Conclusion**

Because the majority of Maryland's school systems have existing policies on student technology use, because these decisions are best left to the local boards of education that are most responsive to the individual needs of their communities, and because SB 928 is now a rigid, statewide prohibition, **MABE respectfully requests an unfavorable report on SB 928.**