

Written Testimony in Support of S 0771

April 23, 2025

Dear Members of the Rhode Island House Education Committee,

As a parent of two children—ages 12 and 8—in the Barrington public school system, **I strongly support S 0771**, which would prohibit “physical access to a personal electronic device by students during the school day.”

I write to you not only as a mother but also as someone who has spent the last 20 years building community across East Coast cities and suburbs, working to create spaces where young people and families can thrive. I am deeply concerned about what lies ahead if we don’t intervene now. Passing this bill is critical for the health, safety, and academic achievement of Rhode Island public school students.

The academic and social cost of allowing unrestricted phone access in our schools is simply too high. When students are on their phones, they aren’t participating in class or connecting with peers. Phones are replacing face-to-face interaction, stunting communication skills and weakening students’ ability to build real relationships—skills they’ll need throughout their lives.

Research consistently shows that phones in school environments reduce focus, hinder learning, and contribute to classroom behavior issues. A 2020 meta-analysis of 41 studies found that student phone use in class was significantly associated with lower academic performance (“[The effects of mobile phone use on academic performance: A meta- analysis](#),” Kates, Wu, & Coryn, *Educational Psychology Review*, March 2018). Meanwhile, schools that have implemented phone bans have reported improved student attention, engagement, and peer interaction.

It’s time to prioritize learning and make our schools distraction-free zones.

Please support and strengthen H 5598 with a **clear bell-to-bell restriction** so schools can confidently enforce a healthy, safe learning environment where our kids can reach their full potential.

Sincerely,
Adina L Davies
Barrington, RI