

Monday, April 21, 2025

To:

HouseEducation@rilegislature.gov

CC:

rep-boylan@rilegislature.gov

rep-knight@rilegislature.gov

sen-lauria@rilegislature.gov

Dear Members of the Rhode Island House Education Committee,

As a parent in the Barrington public school system, **I strongly support H 5598**, which would prohibit “physical access to a personal electronic device by students during the school day.”

I care deeply about the quality of education and the school environment we provide our kids. H 5598 is a much-needed, common sense, evidence-based response to the growing distraction of personal devices during the school day.

When students are on their phones in school, they aren’t connecting with peers, participating in class, or developing the skills they will need in adulthood. We must give them a break from the digital noise.

A 2020 meta-analysis of 41 studies confirms what many educators already know: phone use in schools significantly lowers academic performance ("[The effects of mobile phone use on academic performance: A meta- analysis](#)," Kates, Wu, & Coryn, *Educational Psychology Review*, March 2018). It’s time to prioritize learning and make our schools distraction-free zones.

While some may worry that restricting phone access could pose safety issues, the reality is the opposite. According to experts, students having access to cell phones during emergencies can cause more harm than good. They create noise during lockdowns, distract students from instructions, and clog communication systems when seconds count. (See "[Cell Phones & School Safety](#)," National Association of School Resource Officers.)

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,
Annie Watkins
Barrington, RI