

Testimony for the Committee on Science, Technology, and AI Assembly Bill 2 February 11, 2025

Cell phones can be a distraction for all of us, but it's even worse for students. The interruptions and the pressures of social media are detrimental to children's mental health as well as to their education. Assembly Bill 2 will require schools to ban cell phones and other electronic distractions during class time.

Since smartphones and social media became prevalent in 2010, the mental health of young people across the world has rapidly declined. The impact on young girls has been particularly severe. Suicide among girls has nearly tripled during that time.

You have testimony from Jonathon Haidt. Dr. Haidt is a social psychologist at New York University and the author of the New York Times number-one bestseller, *The Anxious Generation*. Dr. Haidt's book has been incredibly influential in bringing awareness of this crisis to the world. We planned to have Dr. Haidt testify remotely today, but a last minute conflict arose. I hope you will take the time to read his testimony, which will more fully explain the impact on the mental health of young people.

The impact on educational success is nearly as troubling. For fifty years, academic achievement in the U.S. has been steadily climbing. Since 2012, it has steadily declined. The average high schooler spends between 7 and 9 hours per day on their phone, leaving little time for school work and socialization and robbing them of their ability to focus.

Removing them during class time will certainly not solve all these problems. Technology is not going away, but we must teach young people to use it responsibly. Part of that is putting it aside when there is work to do.

Dr. Haidt argues that phones should be removed for the entire school day and I agree with him. Resistance is strong, however, particularly among parents and I do not believe it is politically possible in Wisconsin right now. Removing them during class time is an important first step.

Nearly every school district in Wisconsin already has a policy in place. At the CESA 7 meeting last week, when the superintendents were asked to raise their hands if they had

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Capitol Office: Post Office Box 8952 • Madison, WI 53708-8952 • (608) 266-5350 • Toll-Free: (888) 482-0001 • Fax: (608) 282-3601 Rep.Kitchens@legis.wi.gov a policy, every hand went up. The problem is enforcement. Without a strong, unified approach to the problem, most teachers eventually throw their hands up.

The goal of AB 2 is to provide that unified approach. By applying the power of state law behind these restrictions, we are giving support to our schools. This is not something we are doing *to* the school districts; it is something we are doing *with* them. The vast majority of superintendents with whom I have spoken, including all of those at CESA 7, are appreciative that we are willing to stand with them on this.

AB 2 does not usurp local control. Each district will have its own policy and it will determine how best to restrict phones, as well as how to enforce the policy in its district. I would expect the policy in every district to allow for the use of technology for educational purposes. Additionally, exceptions may be granted for the monitoring of medical conditions like diabetes and for emergency situations. We deliberately drafted the bill to be as open as possible, so that districts can make their own policy on what constitutes an emergency, for instance, and who has to give approval.

Districts are free to restrict phone use beyond what is required in the bill, and it is hoped that many will elect to ban them during lunchtime or for the entire school day. There was some concern about that, so we have drafted an amendment to make it very clear.

Resistance to cell phone restrictions comes primarily from parents. Many feel the need to be able to reach their children 24 hours a day. If they are only banned during class time, they could still reach their kids between classes. Schools will write into their policy how they can be reached in cases of emergency.

Whenever I discuss this bill, someone says that kids need phones in case of a school shooting. Law enforcement is unanimous in saying that in cases of an active shooter situation, the last thing they want is for kids to be on their phones. They should be running and hiding and listening to directions. They do not want their 911 line to be tied up with dozens of conflicting accounts.

The results of cell phone bans in schools have been universally positive in the U.S. and across the world. In Orlando, schools report that students are more engaged, with less bullying and early reports show a dramatic improvement in test scores.

One study compared schools that ban phones against schools that do not. Test scores of 16-year-olds jumped 6.4% in the schools that banned phones. The study also found the positive effects of a ban were twice as large for low-achieving students.

Reports find that, while there may be some resistance initially, students support the policies. They do not mind being away from their devices, as long as everyone else is too.

This is truly a nonpartisan issue. In the last few weeks, the governor of New York issued an executive order to implement an all-day ban policy. When implemented, they will join Louisiana in having the strictest policies in the country. When have those two states ever been united politically?

It's time for Wisconsin to join the growing list of states that have taken steps to limit cell phones and teach responsible technology use.

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RACHAEL A. CABRAL-GUEVARA

STATE SENATOR • 19th Senate District

Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Science, Technology, and AI

Senator Rachael Cabral-Guevara

February 11, 2025

Hello, members of the Assembly Committee on Science, Technology, and AI. Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony on Assembly Bill 2, a proposal that will reduce classroom distractions and improve student outcomes.

The exponential increase of personal technology in our schools has been staggering. According to Common Sense Media, 97 percent of our kids use their phones during the school day. This has led to a decrease in focus, declining educational outcomes, and demonstrated links to an increase in both bullying and cyberbullying.

As a mom of four, I've seen this first-hand with my own kids. Phones are so addictive that my kids have asked me to hold on to their devices while they are working on homework and other classroom assignments.

This bill intends to add Wisconsin to the list of at least eight states, both red and blue, that are taking steps to get distracting technology out of the classroom. California and Florida may not agree on much, but they have agreed that cell phones and other technology can be distracting and lead to worsening outcomes.

By ensuring school boards adopt a policy within a uniform state standard, we have an opportunity to improve not only test scores, but student morale as well. A study from the London School of Economics found that schools which restricted cell phone use saw a 6.4 percent improvement on test scores over to schools that did not. Beyond those benefits, there is also evidence that we can improve social interactions and reduce social ills that have plagued our schools as a result of this new technology.

Some benefits of technology in the classroom would not be prohibited under this bill. More specifically, the proposal exempts prohibitions for instructional purposes, to help manage a child's medical condition, or for perceived threats.

I am hopeful you will support this important step forward to support our teachers, kids, and parents. Thank you for your time.



Jill K. Underly, PhD, State Superintendent

February 11, 2025

Assembly Committee on Science, Technology, and Al Department of Public Instruction Testimony 2025 AB2

I want to thank Chairman Gustafson and members of the committee for the opportunity to give testimony on Assembly Bill 2. My name is Josh Robinson, and I am an Assistant State Superintendent for the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and with me today is Sara Knueve, DPI Policy Initiatives Advisor.

We are here to testify for information only on Assembly Bill 2. Toward the conclusion of our testimony, we will be making some recommendations for consideration.

The DPI's vision is for engaged learners that create a better Wisconsin together. This bill gets to the heart of the word "engaged." What does it mean to be an engaged learner and how do wireless communication devices affect students' ability to pay attention, connect with others, and learn? This is a complex question and our response requires flexibility, responsiveness and clear expectations. We hold two big ideas at once on the topic of wireless communication devices:

Idea Number 1: Technology is here to stay, and it is the role of educators to equip students with the digital learning skills necessary to compete and thrive in today's society.

Idea Number 2: We understand and need to mitigate the negative impact electronic communication devices can have on both student mental health and learning.

This proposed legislation aims to address the negative and disruptive impacts caused by wireless communication devices during instructional time. By limiting their use, the aim is to create a more focused and productive learning environment that enhances student engagement, academic performance and well-being.

Understanding the complexity of this issue and the need for input from educators, families and other partners, the DPI held a series of listening sessions in October 2024. These sessions provided a space to discuss the role of electronic communication devices in the classroom and gather valuable perspectives from those who are directly impacted. The DPI hosted four virtual listening sessions, where we heard from more than 125 participants, including educators, school administrators, DPI staff, school nurses, parents, students, mental health professionals, community members, and the State Superintendent's Family Advisory Council for Engagement.

The first question we asked was, "What is your current local policy regarding cell phones?"

As reported in the 2024-25 State Digital Learning Survey taken by approximately 320 out of the 421 public districts in Wisconsin, approximately 90% of districts that responded to the survey

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already have some sort of restrictive cell phone policy in place. Fewer than 10% of districts did not have a cell phone policy in place and instead left the decision up to individual teachers.

Cell phone policies across Wisconsin schools vary significantly. In general, middle and high schools tend to have some form of restriction, while elementary schools usually enforce a "no phones during the day" policy. To manage devices, some schools use strategies like "phone hotels" or caddies for storage.

Recent discussions have highlighted the need for case-by-case accommodations, such as allowing students with visual impairments to use phones for accessibility or other students needing devices for medical monitoring. Parental concerns about student safety often shape policies, especially in urban areas. Additionally, some educators stress the importance of teaching students how to use devices responsibly, rather than implementing outright bans.

The last question we asked was "What might be helpful for a cell phone policy from a statewide perspective?"

Many district leaders, educators and community members favor district-specific policies instead of state-wide mandates, reflecting Wisconsin's long-held belief in local control. Many also suggest that the DPI offer model policies, best practices, and research to support local decisionmaking. Flexibility is crucial to accommodate diverse student needs, to keep up with rapid technological advancements, and to respond to the unique contexts of different communities.

While many prefer local control, most who attended listening sessions called for each district to have clear policies related to cell phone use that are district-wide, developmentally appropriate and concisely communicated to families.

Policies in other States that Restrict Cell Phones during Instructional Time

In addition to listening sessions held in Wisconsin, we also evaluated policies from other states regarding cell phones. Currently, approximately 15 states have laws in place that restrict the use of these devices in schools. <u>A study by the Education Commission of the States found that most states' policies are flexible enough to address cell phone use at the local level, allowing school districts to develop and implement policies that best suit the collective needs of their students.</u>

In addition to policies related to cell phones, districts understand their role in effectively integrating educational technology to prepare students for success in an ever-changing digital world. When technology is woven into curriculum, educators can create interactive and engaging learning experiences that encourage critical thinking and problem-solving. Teaching students how to use these tools responsibly and effectively helps them develop the skills they need for future careers. By emphasizing digital literacy and citizenship, we ensure that students aren't just passive users of technology, but informed, ethical participants in the digital world.

Any restrictions on electronic communication devices should allow for flexibility, giving educators the ability to let students use these tools for learning when it's appropriate. Device policies should also go hand in hand with a strong focus on digital citizenship, both at school and at home. This means taking a thoughtful, evidence-based approach for teaching both students and adults how to stay safe, healthy, and productive in online spaces.

Impact on Mental Health

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One of the primary advantages of the restricted use of mobile electronic communication devices is the potential for improved academic focus and performance. Studies have demonstrated that cell phone use, particularly for non-academic purposes like social media or texting, can disrupt students' concentration and hinder their ability to retain information.

Additionally, reducing access to cell phones during school hours has been associated with positive social and behavioral impacts. Unstructured use of phones often leads to issues like cyberbullying and social isolation, as highlighted by the Journal of Adolescent Health, which explores how cell phones can exacerbate feelings of exclusion and anxiety, especially through social media use¹. Schools that have implemented cell phone bans during instructional time have reported declines in bullying incidents and improvements in student engagement and behavior. This suggests that district-implemented restrictions can provide a more inclusive and supportive atmosphere that prioritizes students' well-being.

Recommendations for 2025 AB 2

The department believes the goal of limiting technology disruptions during instructional time is wise. Our recommendations take the approach of setting a statewide policy goal of restricting non-district issued electronic devices and leaving the local implementation of the policy up to school boards and communities, instead of starting with an outright ban of all electronic communication devices, including both non-district issued and district issued, and adding back exemptions.

Recommendation 1:

DPI recommends the bill should require each school board to develop and adopt a policy that <u>limits</u> or prohibits pupils' use of electronic communication devices during instructional time and also **articulates specific times that the district cannot prohibit use of devices**, such as during an emergency or a perceived threat, managing a pupil's physical or mental health care, included in a pupil's individual education program, or authorized by a teacher for educational purposes during instructional time. The DPI believes that local districts understand their students' needs best and should have the flexibility to create policies with input from community partners when limiting or prohibiting the use of electronic communication devices during instructional time.

Recommendation 2:

There is an existing state statute, Wisconsin Statute 118.258, that currently states that each school board **may** adopt policies that prohibit a pupil from using electronic communication devices on premises owned or rented by or under the control of a public school. The DPI recommends that the statute be amended or repealed to align with the final version of AB 2.

Recommendation 3:

Currently the proposed bill does not make a clear distinction between non-district issued wireless communication devices and district issued wireless communication devices. The DPI feels it is important for the proposed bill to be clear on this distinction.

¹ Journal of Adolescent Health. "Unstructured Use of Phones and Its Impact on Cyberbullying and Social Isolation." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 64, no. 2 (2019): 123-130. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2018.09.012.

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We recognize issues around cell phone use and etiquette go far beyond the classroom. AB 2 addresses a small part of the time our youth have access to this technology, and today's discussion highlights the need to tackle these broader societal challenges.

In closing, the Department of Public Instruction is dedicated to offering the necessary model policy guidance and support our districts' need to manage electronic communication devices in their schools in a way that enhances learning and minimizes their impact on student mental health. We appreciate Representative Kitchens for his open communication throughout this process and look forward to working with him on the suggestions we've shared today.

Thank you for your time and attention. We would be happy to answer any questions you have at this time.

Please direct any follow-up questions to Sara Knueve, Policy Initiatives Advisor, at <u>sara.knueve@dpi.wi.gov</u>.

Response to information request



Erin Whinnery ewhinnery@ecs.org July 11, 2024

Your Question:

A state legislator asked for information on cell phone use policies in schools.

Our Response:

The issue of cell phone use in schools is wide-reaching and touches on topics from privacy to acceptable use. According to a <u>2022 study</u> done by Pew Research Center, the vast majority of teens say they have access to a digital device, such as a smartphone (95%) or a desktop or laptop computer (90%), and 97% of teens say they are on the internet daily. Additionally, 46% say they are online almost constantly. According to the <u>National Center on</u> <u>Education Statistics</u>, almost 77% of schools have banned cellphone use in school as of 2020.

Based on a preliminary scan of state policy, state education agency resources and local education agency policies, Education Commission of the States found that the issue of cell phone use in schools is most often dealt with at the local level. When addressed at the state level, the policy generally 1) broadly defines what constitutes a misuse of a cell phone, 2) directs local agencies to adopt acceptable use policies and 3) prohibits the use of cell phones during state-administered testing. This response offers an overview of state and local policies on cell phone use in schools.

State Policy on Cell Phone Use in Schools

Few states directly address the use of cell phones in classrooms. A preliminary scan of existing and pending state policy revealed that states often identified the misuse of a cell phone as part of a greater issue or directed local education authorities to develop and implement policy.

Alabama

In February, the state board passed a <u>resolution</u> strongly encouraging local boards to adopt a policy limiting cell phone use while on school property.

California A.B. 272 (Enacted, 2019)

This bill authorizes the governing body of a school district, a county office of education or a charter school to adopt a policy limiting or prohibiting student use of smartphones while students are on school grounds. Students may use cell phones in case of an emergency, with employee permission or when allowed through an individualized education plan.

Florida H.B. 379 (Enacted, 2023)

This bill prohibits students from using cell phones during instructional time and requires teachers to designate an area for cell phones during instructional time.

Indiana S.B. 185 (Enacted, 2024)

This bill requires public schools, including charter schools, to adopt and implement a wireless communication device policy that regulates student use of a wireless communication device, including cell phones, tablets, laptops and gaming devices. This policy must be published on the school's website.

Education Commission of the States strives to respond to information requests within 48 hours. This document reflects our best efforts but it may not reflect exhaustive research. Please let us know if you would like a more comprehensive response. Our staff is also available to provide unbiased advice on policy plans, consult on proposed legislation and testify at legislative hearings as third-party experts.

Kentucky Rev. Stat. Ann. § 158.165

State statute requires the board of education of each school district to develop a policy regarding the possession and use of cell phones by students while on school property or while attending a school-sponsored event. The policy is to be included in the district's standards of student conduct.

Ohio H.B. 250 (Enacted, 2024)

This bill requires school districts to adopt a cell phone policy that seeks to limit cell phone use during school hours.

South Carolina Code Ann. Regs. 43-279 (IV)(A)(2)(j)

State policy establishes minimum standards for student conduct that school districts must address in their local student conduct policy. Among the activities and behaviors identified is the possession of cell phones in schools. Consequences for cell phone misuse, as defined by the district, can range from a verbal reprimand to consequences in coordination with local authorities depending on the specific school policy.

Texas S.B. 2375 (Failed, 2023)

This bill would have required the board of trustees of a school district and the governing body of a charter school to prohibit students from using a cell phone during instructional time.

Virginia EO-33 (2024)

At the beginning of July, Gov. Glen Younkin issued an executive order directing the department of education to draft guidance for schools to adopt policies that would establish cell phone-free education. The guidance must include processes for parents to communicate with their children.

Local Policy on Cell Phone Use in Schools

In general, the use of cell phones in schools is addressed through district or school level policy that ranges from outright bans across a district to the authorization of schools to set restrictions. Often, districts provide schools with direction but ultimately leave enforcement and monitoring up to the school.

Chicago, Illinois

Chicago Public Schools **policy** allows school principals to form policy on possession of cell phones at school. If cell phones are authorized to be on school grounds, the school policy must identify when cell phones can be used and how they must be kept when on school grounds. Principals may also prohibit cell phones but must allow individual students to possess them for good cause and with a written request from a parent or guardian.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Milwaukee Public Schools **policy** allows students to possess cell phones on school grounds, but they cannot be activated, displayed or used while in school other than for approved education purposes. The restriction also applies to extracurricular activities and field trips.

New York City, New York

In 2007, the New York City superintendent banned cell phones in all public schools. This policy was <u>overturned</u> in 2015. Currently, New York City <u>policy</u> allows students to bring a cell phone to school. Under the district policy, each school is charged with developing their own cell phone policy and students who bring a cell phone to school must follow each individual school's cell phone rules.

Education Commission of the States strives to respond to information requests within 48 hours. This document reflects our best efforts but it may not reflect exhaustive research. Please let us know if you would like a more comprehensive response. Our staff is also available to provide unbiased advice on policy plans, consult on proposed legislation and testify at legislative hearings as third-party experts.

Additional Resources

National Education Association, Cell Phone Bans in School Are Back. How Far Will They Go? (2023)

This article provides an overview of the issue with useful research, perspectives from school leaders and parents, and a discussion of district and school-level policies.

EdWeek, Schools Say No to Cellphones in Class. But Is It a Smart Move? (2019)

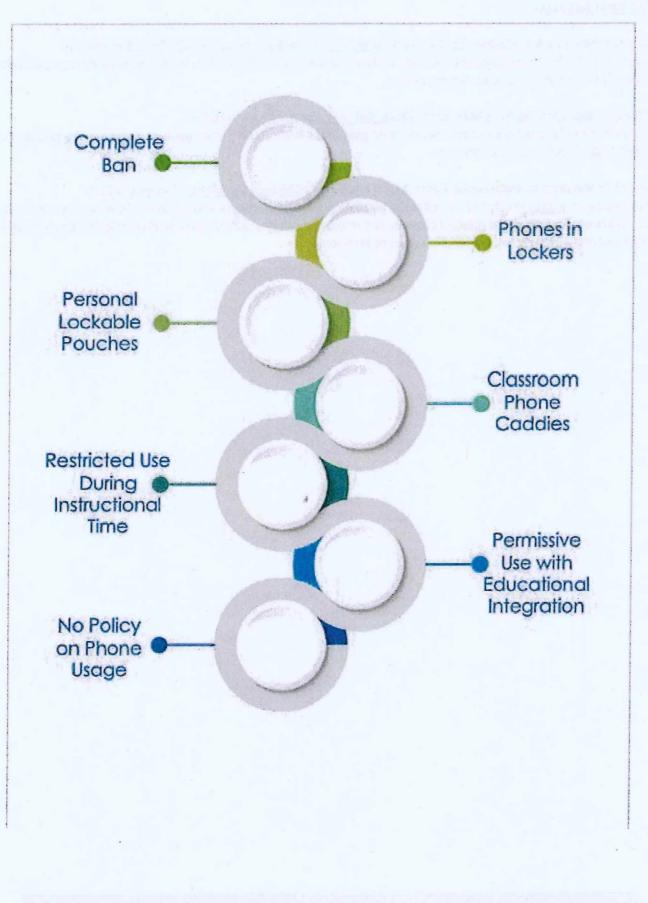
This article provides examples of school and state guidelines around cell phone use and discusses the pros and cons of restricting student access to phones.

National Conference of State Legislatures, Social Media and Children Legislative Tracking (2024)

This resource catalogs introduced and enacted legislation related to minors and social media more broadly, including state efforts to regulate social media networks and content providers, efforts to provide media literacy education in schools and other efforts to ensure safe access to technology.

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Non-District Issued Electronic Communication Devices: Continuum of Model Policy Guidance for Districts





122 W. WASHINGTON AVENUE, MADISON, WI 53703 PHONE: 608-257-2622 • TOLL-FREE: 877-705-4422 FAX: 608-257-8386 • WEBSITE: WASB.ORG DANIEL M. ROSSMILLER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TO:Members, Assembly Committee on Science, Technology, and AIFROM:Christopher Kulow, WASB Government Relations DirectorDATE:February 11, 2025RE:ASSEMBLY BILL 2, requiring school boards to adopt policies to prohibit the use of
wireless communication devices during instructional time.

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) is a voluntary membership association representing Wisconsin public school boards.

Over the past few years, school and state leaders across the country have acted on concerns about how cell phone use is impacting students and teachers. Concerns like student data privacy, cheating, social media use, mental health impacts and distractions during instruction time have sparked questions about how state policy can help schools respond.

While we generally oppose state mandates on school boards, we appreciate the effort by the authors to provide local school boards flexibility in what their policy looks like. If a school board has a policy approach to cell phones and other devices that is working for them, this bill should not require them to scrap it in favor of something else. This is important because, while this bill is new here in the Capitol, schools have been dealing with this issue for years now and many districts have policies. We also note that there should not be any significant cost involved in complying with this policy mandate.

The bill will likely result in boards needing to adjust their policies somewhat for the requirements in the bill (particularly for including district-issued devices) and if a board does not have a policy, they will have to adopt one that meets the bill's requirements.

While we generally appreciate the bill's approach, we have some ideas for how the bill could be improved:

- 1. All taxpayer funded schools should be included under the requirements of this bill. This should include independent charter schools and private choice schools. Not including these schools undermines the arguments in support of this bill.
- 2. An addition should be made to clarify that the required exceptions do not imply that a district is required to allow students to possess their devices during the day. If a school board desired a more stringent policy (i.e.- a policy where students do not have access to their personal devices during the instructional day or at certain other times) that approach should not be prohibited by this bill, and I do not believe that was the authors' intent. As an example, perhaps something along the lines of, "Nothing in this (sub)section prohibits a school board or a designee of the school board from restricting pupils' possession of wireless communication devices during instructional time or from restricting pupils' possession and use of wireless communication devices at other times and locations that are within the supervisory jurisdiction of the school board and the school board's employees and authorized agents, including by requiring such devices to be stored in a particular

location and in a powered-off status."

- 3. Language should be added that would clarify a potential loophole regarding the exception to the policy for "an emergency or a perceived threat". Right now, there could be an opening for students to make arguments that they "felt" threatened by something, or that they thought a call/message they were receiving *may have been* an emergency. Perhaps that specific exception could be that there would not be disciplinary consequences for a violation of the policy if a school official concludes that a student reasonably used a device in direct response to an imminent health or safety emergency or an imminent and reasonably perceived threat to health or safety. In other words, apply some sort of standard that is "as determined by school officials." As another example that might be a starting point for modifying the "emergency" exception, "As determined by the school board or by a designee of the school board and not solely by a pupil's subjective belief, use that was a reasonable response to a health or safety emergency or to a perceived imminent threat."
- 4. We think it the bill should coordinate and integrate with existing s. <u>118.258</u>. We believe coordinating the two statutes (i.e., combining the two policy mandates within a single statutory section or subsection) would probably be a good approach. Section 118.258 is the current statute that allows schools to have these types of rules or policies:

118.258 Electronic communication devices prohibited.

(1) Each school board may adopt rules prohibiting a pupil from using or possessing an electronic communication device while on premises owned or rented by or under the control of a public school.

(2) Annually, if the school board adopts rules under sub. (1), it shall provide each pupil enrolled in the school district with a copy of the rules.

We hope that the authors will consider addressing these issues in an amendment.

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TO:	Assembly Committee on Science, Technology, and AI
FROM:	Dee Pettack, Executive Director
DATE:	February 11, 2025
RE:	Assembly Bill 2

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this legislation. My name is Dee Pettack, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Wisconsin School Administrators Alliance (SAA). The SAA represents the collective memberships of five professional associations of public school administrators:

- The Association of Wisconsin School Administrators (AWSA)
- The Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials (WASBO)
- The Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators (WASDA)
- The Wisconsin Association of School Personnel Administrators (WASPA)
- The Wisconsin Council for Administrators of Special Services (WCASS)

Assembly Bill 2 (AB 2) requires all school boards to adopt policies by July 1, 2026, prohibiting students from using wireless communication devices during instructional time. The bill defines these devices as portable electronics capable of voice, messaging, or data communication, including cell phones, tablets, laptops, and gaming devices.

The proposed policies must include exceptions for:

- Emergencies or perceived threats
- Managing a student's health care needs
- Uses outlined in a student's individualized education program (IEP) or 504 plan
- Teacher-authorized educational purposes during instructional time

School boards shall also establish further exceptions if the school board determines doing so is beneficial to pupil learning or well-being. The bill also grants school boards the authority to set consequences for policy violations, including confiscating a student's device for the remainder of the school day.

The SAA appreciates the author's engagement with school leaders in the 1st Assembly District and the recognition of the need for certain exceptions. We are actively consulting with our members to assess whether any provisions in AB 2 may conflict with existing district policies. One area of concern is the bill's broad application to all devices, including school-issued technology, which may require school boards to revise their current policies.

We understand that an amendment to AB 2 may be forthcoming, and we welcome the opportunity to review any proposed changes to evaluate their impact on school policies already developed in partnership with local communities. Additionally, we encourage consideration of extending this policy to all schools receiving taxpayer funding to ensure consistency across educational institutions.

O'Keeffe, David

From:	Wachtel, Angela <awachtel@littlechute.k12.wi.us> Monday, February 10, 2025 4:20 PM</awachtel@littlechute.k12.wi.us>		
Sent:			
Subject:	Assembly Bill 2 "wireless communication devices" Detrimenta		
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Hello,

You are reading this email, so you understand that in today's world - a world where education prepares students to be academic, career, and life ready - the use of digital tools is a natural part of how we do business. It is also how we educate.

This bill would create unnecessary barriers to student learning.

All schools currently have a plethora of policies guiding safe use of technology, which clearly articulate how technology can and cannot be used. These policies define when cell phones can be used. These policies define what is appropriate and inappropriate use. Look up your local board policies. They are there.

The sweeping categorization ignores the fact that these tools are essential for modern education. They are used to research, collaborate, and engage students. By automatically classifying tablets, laptops and cellphones alongside gaming devices unfairly stigmatizes technology.

Modern education increasingly relies on technology, including those that this bill seeks to restrict. More and more curricula are online. Many teachers incorporate digital resources, online assessments, and digital collaboration. In addition, schools educate students to be smart digital consumers and follow standards set by our state. This is the environment to support and educate students, a safe and supportive place to have these important conversations about digital safety.

A broad ban on wireless communication devices creates more enforcement problems than it solves. Teachers and administrators would be tasked with distinguishing between "approved" and "prohibited" uses on a daily basis, leading to inconsistent application of the rules.

Making "wireless communication devices" illegal and then having to make policies to use them is counterproductive. This is contrary to being forward thinking and leaders in a technological world. If we truly want to prepare students for the future, we should embrace and not prohibit technology. I urge you to reject this bill.

	1 A BAR	
	Angela Wachtel	
NX/a	Instruction, and Assessment	
NO LOU	© 920-788-7600	
	awachtel@littlechute.k12.wi.us	
'LE CHUTE	1402 Freedom Rd. Little Chute, WI 54140	
School District	www.littlechute.k12.wi.us	

What am I Reading Now?



The Mission of Little Chute Area School District is dedicated to fostering a community of learners where we meet the academic, social and emotional needs of <u>all</u> students.

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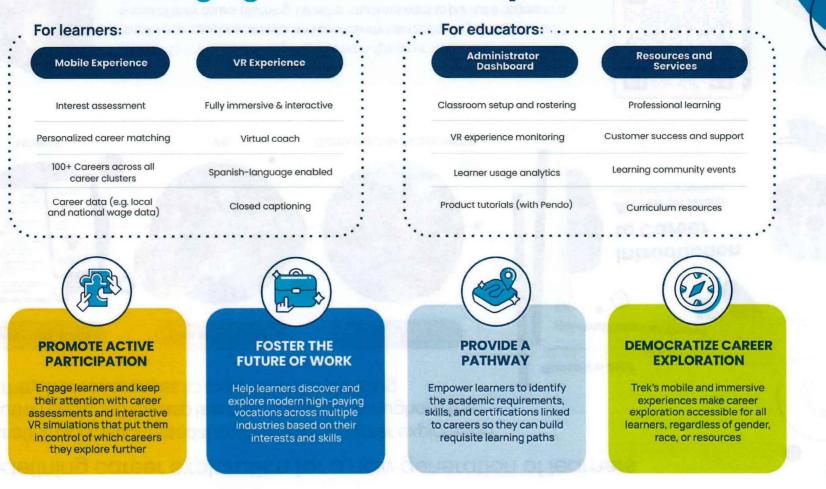
Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Putnam Valley School District in New York



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O'Keeffe, David

	Greg Kabara <greg.kabara@nicolet.us></greg.kabara@nicolet.us>
Sent:	Tuesday, February 11, 2025 5:59 AM
То:	Rep.Madison
Subject:	Re: AB 2 thoughts - in committee Tuesday - Nicolet
Attachments:	Personal Communication Devices Policy.pdf

David,

I spoke with Rep. Madison via phone last night regarding AB-2 and I have included a response to his questions below. Attached is the current policy on Personal Communication Devices that is in place at Nicolet Union High School. We have worked to improve the implementation and have limited phone use during instructional time.

1. Before writing a bill mandating a school board policy it may be necessary to collect data from the 421 school districts to determine if schools already have a policy in place. I would assume most if not all schools have a policy in place at this time. NEOLA, a company that provides schools with school board policy aligned to legislation and trends across multiple states, provides templates for policies which include the language in the proposed bill (See attached). Schools work with NEOLA and other companies to adopt policies to provide clarity and protection. When cell phones became popular in schools, privacy, cameras and recording became a topic of concern and schools adopted policies to protect students and staff.

2. Banning all wireless devices in schools with "exceptions" does not make sense. Nicolet, like numerous other schools, are now one-to-one using wireless devices as the primary resource for learning. It appears we would need to write an exception into policy to allow students to have a wireless device for the normal operations and daily learning.

2b. The State mandated ACT test is administered during junior year of high school and is an online test. This requires schools to administer all testing via devices. Wireless devices are our primary tool for administering the test. Will this be another exception? Again, we would be creating an exception to allow normal operations. 2c. Nicolet leverages our one-to-one devices during school closures to ensure continuity of learning during snow days, inclement weather days, construction etc. Over the past few years we have not canceled school amid cold weather, snow days, 18 months of construction = zero days of lost instruction with the implementation of wireless devices. Another exception?

3. The language in AB-2 does not clarify for students, staff or employees. Will all employees need to be an exception for wireless laptops and cell phones. We absolutely want our physical education teachers, classroom teachers and student supervisors to have cell phones in emergency situations and laptop devices for standard working conditions.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

This bill requires each school board to adopt, by July 1, 2026, a policy that generally prohibits pupils from using wireless communication devices during instructional time. For purposes of these policies, the bill requires each school board to define a "wireless communication device" as a portable wireless device that is capable of providing voice, messaging, or other data communication between two or more parties. The bill expressly states that this definition must include cellular phones, tablet computers, laptop computers, and gaming devices. Finally, under the bill, each school board must include in its wireless communication device policy exceptions to the general prohibition against using wireless communication devices during instructional time 1)

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for emergencies and perceived threats, 2) to manage a pupil's health care, 3) for a use included in an individualized education program or 504 plan, and 4) for a use authorized by a teacher for educational purposes. The bill also authorizes a school board to include other exceptions if the school board determines that doing so is beneficial for pupil education or well-being.

Line by line analysis

This bill requires each school board to adopt, by July 1, 2026, a policy that generally prohibits pupils from using wireless communication devices during instructional time. Nicolet has a school board policy that outlines the use of personal communication devices at school (See attached). I strongly believe most schools have a similar policy.

For purposes of these policies, the bill requires each school board to define a "wireless communication device" as a portable wireless device that is capable of providing voice, messaging, or other data communication between two or more parties. This calls out chrome books and other laptop devices which would be contrary to schools who are leveraging one-to-one computers for student learning and access to textbooks.

The bill expressly states that this definition must include cellular phones, tablet computers, laptop computers, and gaming devices. Same as above. Normal day to day operations become an exception to the bill.

Finally, under the bill, each school board must include in its wireless communication device policy exceptions to the general prohibition against using wireless communication devices during instructional time 1) for emergencies and perceived threats, 2) to manage a pupil's health care, 3) for a use included in an individualized education program or 504 plan, and 4) for a use authorized by a teacher for educational purposes. Included in the current policy or could be added to current policy. The bill also authorizes a school board to include other exceptions if the school board determines that doing so is beneficial for pupil education or well-being. Exceptions: normal class instruction, access to online textbooks, school closures, State mandated ACT testing, Advanced Placement (AP) testing or when the teacher allows the device for educational purposes.

It seems that the language in the Assembly Bill 2 is extremely broad and would require too many exceptions to make the general language of the bill effective. Schools leverage wireless devices to provide and advance student learning as part of our normal school operations. Limiting cell phones, gaming devices etc. to maintain an effective learning environment is essential in the classroom. While I understand the overall intent of the bill it seems too broad and less effective than allowing schools local control in regards to wireless devices during the school day.

Your partner in education, Greg Kabara Ph.D. Superintendent Nicolet Union High School District 6701 N. Jean Nicolet Road Glendale, WI 53217 (414) 351-7525 greg.kabara@nicolet.us Every Student, Every Classroom, Every Day

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O'Keeffe, David

From: Sent: To: Subject:	Laurie Burgos <lburgos@shorewood.k12.wi.us> Tuesday, February 11, 2025 8:16 AM Rep.Madison Amended Testimony (includes budget requests)</lburgos@shorewood.k12.wi.us>	
Follow Up Flag: Flag Status:	Follow up Flagged	

Dear Representative Madison,

I am writing to request this email be submitted as written testimony in opposition to AB 2 addressing cell phone/device use in schools.

In the Shorewood School District, we understand and share the concern about minimizing distractions and promoting student engagement in classrooms. To address this, we would like to emphasize that our district already has clear and effective policies in place to manage cell phone use at Shorewood High School (SHS), Shorewood Intermediate School (SIS), and both Atwater and Lake Bluff Elementary Schools. Given our existing local policies and practices, we do not see a need for a state-level mandate on this issue and believe this effort is unnecessary with the local control school boards have in our state.

At SHS, our **2024-2025 Cell Phone Policy** ensures that classrooms remain focused learning environments while allowing students appropriate opportunities to access their devices during non-instructional times. At SIS and our elementary schools, students may not access devices at all during the day. All of these practices have proven to be successful in the eyes of staff, families, and a majority of our students.

Our district's approach to cell phone use aligns with our broader commitment to academic excellence, equity, and belonging, while allowing flexibility to meet the specific needs of our students and staff. As previously stated, we believe that local school districts are best positioned to develop and implement policies that reflect the unique needs of their communities. A one-size-fits-all state law may not allow for the adaptability required in different educational settings.

We welcome the opportunity to further discuss how local policies like ours successfully address concerns around technology use in classrooms without the need for additional legislation. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you would like to learn more about our district's approach.

Additionally, we appreciate your dedication to supporting public education and respectfully request the legislature consider the following budget priorities in your upcoming conversations:

1. Special Education Reimbursement: We request the legislature establish a long-term goal to provide an increase in special education funding to cover at least 60% reimbursement in years one and two of the biennium budget with the long-term goal of reaching 90% reimbursement over several budget cycles. This funding should be guaranteed and not prorated if costs are higher than anticipated (sum sufficient funding). Increases in special education funding provide more predictable, stable funding that supports all students due to less of a transfer from the school district's general fund. In the Shorewood School District, our operating transfer to Fund 27 was \$2,055,287.87 in the 2024-25 school year. This year it is expected to be \$2,403,280.

2. Revenue Limit Increases: We also request an increase in the revenue limit by \$415 in year one and \$430 in year two to keep pace with inflation. This provides general, flexible, spendable revenue for school districts. If the state continues to invest in public education, fewer school districts will be forced to go to operating referendums to maintain services and cover increasing costs. Absent operating referendum dollars from a successful operating referendum in April 2023, the Shorewood School District would have a \$3.7M deficit in our fiscal year 25 budget.

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Thank you again for your commitment to students and investing in their future.

and the second second

Sincerely,	
Du Lauria Dumana Ouranintan dant	
Laurie J. Burgos, Ph.D. Pronouns: she/her/hers Superintendent Shorewood School District 1701 East Capitol Drive Shorewood, WI 53211	
(414) 963-6901	
Equity, Growth, & Excellence For All	

Shorewood

The Shorewood School District does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, religion, age, sexual orientation, creed, ancestry, pregnancy, marital or parental status, gender identity or expression, veteran status, physical, mental, emotional or learning disability, or any other legally protected status in its educational programs, activities, or employment with the District. The District also provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following designee handles inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies: Director of Human Resources, Title IX Coordinator and Compliance Officer, 1701 E. Capitol Drive, Shorewood, WI 53211, 414-961-2854, <u>humanresources@shorewood.k12.wi.us</u>.

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The Shorewood School District prohibits sex discrimination in any education program or activity that it operates. Individuals may report concerns or questions to the Title IX Coordinator. The full notice of nondiscrimination is located <u>here</u>.

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February 11, 2025

Testimony in SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

Dear Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on behalf of Assembly Bill 2, relating to requiring school boards to adopt policies to prohibit the use of wireless communication devices during instructional time. I also want to thank the representatives who introduced this important bill.

I am a Milwaukee parent with two daughters, ages 6 and 3. And I'm also someone who—even as an adult with a fully developed brain (theoretically!)—has struggled to manage the distractions of smartphones and social media, which is why I'm so passionate about protecting our vulnerable kids from these harms.

Former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy said, "Schools should ensure that classroom learning and social time are phone-free experiences." I couldn't agree more.

Recent studies have found that:

- 65% of students report being distracted by digital devices in class. (PISA survey)
- 35% of teens admit to using their phone to cheat. (Common Sense)
- One third of teens report being exposed to pornography at school. (<u>Common</u> <u>Sense</u>)
- When teens spend more than 3 hours per day on social media, their risk of anxiety and depression doubles, but teens today average almost 5 hours per day on social media. (American Psychological Association)
- 72% of U.S. high school teachers say cell phone distraction is a major problem in the classroom, with 83% of the members of the <u>National Education Association</u> supporting prohibiting cell phone and personal device use during the entire school day, from the first bell to the last bell.

Our kids need a break, which is why almost every state in the U.S. has either passed or has introduced legislation to restrict phone use in schools. But not all of these bills are equal. Fortunately, we have **model legislation** that defines the best practice policy. I support this bill with the following amendments that reflect the model legislation:

• Extend the policy to be bell-to-bell (for the entire school day including lunch and passing periods), and physically separate students from all personal devices. Studies have found that the mere presence of a cell phone, even when it is silenced and stored out of sight, reduces cognitive capacity. Free from devices, kids are able to spend more time focusing on teachers and their fellow peers.

- Expand definition of "wireless communication devices" to include Bluetooth-enabled devices and smartwatches and other wearables. These devices also cause distraction, taking kids away from learning.
- Eliminate exceptions for instructional time, emergencies, and school-board determinations. There are two important exceptions that are already in this bill and that should remain: medical needs and special education needs. Exceptions for instructional time, emergencies, and school-board determinations should be removed for the following reasons. Instructional time because no teacher should require a student to use a distracting device like a smartphone for the purpose of learning. Emergencies because experts say that kids should be focused on listening to instructions during emergencies, not on calling parents. School board determinations for the reasons stated previously.
- Require school boards to adopt policy that prohibits use of social media platforms for student and parent communication. Schools should not use social media as a primary communications tool because parents should have the freedom to make individual choices about whether or not to use social media, both for themselves and their kids.

In summary, children need time away from the addictive pull of smartphones and social media. They need their minds free to focus on academics and their eyes off their screens to have face-to-face conversations. Let's not miss this opportunity to provide the gift of a phone-free education to all the children of Wisconsin.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Christina Dinur Milwaukee-based parent and Smartphone Free Childhood US Co-Lead <u>christina.dinur@gmail.com</u> 404-664-4643



Date: February 11, 2025

Dear Chairman Gustafson and members of the Science, Technology, and Al Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on Assembly Bill 2. My name is Evan Eagleson, and I am the Legislative Director for the Great Lakes Region with <u>ExcelinEd</u> in <u>Action</u>, a national non-profit focused on education reform and improved student outcomes in the states. I am writing in support of Assembly Bill 2.

I want to first thank Chairman Gustafson for giving AB 2 a hearing and express our gratitude to the many authors and co-sponsors for making this issue such a high priority. This effort may seem small, but it can be one of the most impactful bills of the session.

According to Dr. Jonathan Haidt, a social psychologist who has studied this issue extensively, smartphone usage has been adopted faster than any other technology in recent history.

Most kids in 2010 did not have a smartphone, myself included. Back then, I was in eighth grade and had just gotten my first cell phone, a flip phone with no apps that could only send 100 texts a month. Just five years later, nearly everyone had smart phones. I was lucky enough to receive my first smartphone during my junior year of high school, and when I compare it to the powerful tool in my pocket now, that 2015 version pales in comparison to what we have today. The apps that we use have become more powerful, popular and downright addictive. This has led to more time on all of our devices, but especially with our young students.

As the father of young children, I worry about what they will have to contend with when they are old enough to have access to this technology. At the very least, I hope they will be able to learn in a distraction-free schooling environment.

The University of Michigan Medicine's CS Mott Children's Hospital conducted a <u>study</u> on student's cell phone use that found that on average, 97% of students use their phones during the school day. Additionally, they receive 237 notifications a day, with 25% of those occurring while at school. Most students spend 7-9 hours a day on their phones, which has very real implications both inside and outside the classroom.

Sleep deprivation is up among students since 2013. The time they spend with friends is down 65% since 2010. Students' attention is fragmented.

All these statistics are troubling, especially when you begin to think about the required student learning that is supposed to happen throughout these important years. That is why states are taking bold action.

Indiana and Ohio are two states in this region that have passed similar proposals to try to cut down on distractions in the classroom while providing the same exceptions listed in AB 2.

States like Louisiana, South Carolina and Virginia have taken it a step further and prohibited cell phone usage from bell to bell, which further cuts down on distractions, cyberbullying and social media-related conflicts. Studies have shown that it takes 23 minutes on average to regain complete focus following an interruption. Something so small as checking a quick text during class can lead to a student falling off track very quickly. Because of this, these states decided to completely remove the distraction from the school building throughout the day.

We support AB 2 and applaud Wisconsin for taking on this issue. Students deserve to learn, and educators deserve to teach, in a distraction-free environment. This legislation will make that goal a reality.

Thank you again to Chairman Gustafson, Rep. Kitchens, Rep. Knodl and all the additional authors and co-sponsors for making AB 2 a priority. I appreciate your time and consideration, and I look forward to tracking this legislation throughout the process.

Respectfully,

Evan Eagleson Legislative Director, Great Lakes Region ExcelinEd in Action

Dear Wisconsin Legislators,

We are writing to support <u>current efforts</u> to support phone free schools in Wisconsin. However, we think that the current bill can and should be made stronger, by clarifying that schools should adopt a policy that applies throughout the school day, rather than just during classroom time, in addition to a few further suggestions that we elaborate on below.

We are the author and primary researcher of the book, *The Anxious Generation*, which documented the negative effects that smartphones and heavy use of social media has had on youth around the globe. The book has spent more than 35 weeks at the top of bestseller lists and has been used to motivate grassroots mobilization of students, teachers, administrators, and parents for phone free schools. Technology can certainly provide benefits to young people, but the current business incentives and practices of some tech companies are leading them to cause vast harm to children and adolescents. Protecting kids from online harm is non-partisan, and supported by the majority of Americans. Legislators have the opportunity to take clear decisive action, joining the bi-partisan movement to protect kids' mental health, attention, and relationships by supporting phone-free schools.

The proposed legislation would be an important step in giving kids a break from harmful and addictive technology for the 6-7 hours each weekday that they are at school. This is critically important for students, as well as for teachers and administrators. Schools influence 13 years of critical child development and can help students establish lifelong patterns of healthy behavior. Based on our research, we believe that phone free policies are likely to provide substantial academic, socio-emotional, safety, and economic benefits for schools.

Phone-free schools are likely to reduce distraction and increase student focus. Recent studies have found that students receive an average of <u>237 notifications</u> each day. Just during the school day, <u>students spend an average of 90 minutes on their phones</u>, with 25% spending more than 2 hours. <u>Experimental studies</u> have found that student use of devices reduces subsequent academic performance. <u>35 percent of students</u> admit to using their phones to cheat. <u>Many instances</u> of bullying and fighting begin with electronic communications.

Teachers, who are most qualified to comment on the effects of phones in schools, see the problem. <u>84%</u> of educators believe that social media contributes to mental health issues among students at their schools. <u>91%</u> said social media has negatively impacted how students treat people in real life.

The problems have reached a tipping point. Teacher morale is plummeting and <u>some teachers</u> have been driven to quit. <u>88% of teachers</u> believe that smartphones make their students more distracted or tired, while 74% believe they make students more depressed, anxious, or lonely and 85% believe they increase student conflict and bullying. <u>72% of high school teachers</u> say that cell phone distraction in their classes is a major problem. <u>83% of teachers</u> support a policy that prohibits phone use for the entire school day.

Although there are many strengths to the current bill, we believe that this important legislation could be made even stronger in several ways. We would ask that any policy have these five essential features, as elaborated in <u>this model bill</u>:

- 1. **Require all schools in the state to comply. -** This eliminates any confusion across districts, sets a norm for an entire community, and allows students to relax, knowing that they will not be missing activity from friends at other schools. We believe that this bill should set a strong uniform policy now, while the issue has legislative attention.
- Physically separate students from all personal devices. The regular use of devices in school is a distraction to students, whether a device is a smartphone or is just used to receive text messages. We would encourage you to add this specification within the current bill.
- 3. Ban phones for the entire school day. A classtime-only rule also doesn't give teachers as much benefit as they might expect. Research from the National Education Association found that 73% of teachers in schools that allow phone use *between* classes report that phones are disruptive *during* class. In contrast, of the several policies examined, only the phone-free or "away for the day" policy produced good results with only 28% of teachers in such schools saying that phones were disruptive during their classes. It is only when students have 6-7 hours away from their phones that they fully turn to each other and to their teachers. This provision is critically important and so we would encourage you to add this specification as mandatory across districts within the current bill.
- 4. Stop schools from requiring smartphones and social media use. Schools should not use social media as a primary communications tool, to allow parents the freedom to make individual choices about whether or not to use social media, both for themselves and their kids. We feel that this would be an important addition to consider.
- 5. Include two (and only two) important exceptions. While it may be tempting to add many exceptions to placate parent fears, there are only two that we have found to be widely necessary: medical needs, and special education needs. Some students may have a legitimate health or educational need that requires access to their own smartphone. On the other hand, a common exception that gets included in many bills is mandating that students should have access to their phones in case of emergencies. But these exceptions are problematic because while it makes perfect emotional sense for parents to want to talk to kids during an emergency, <u>experts</u> suggest that kids should be focused on listening to instructions during emergencies, not on calling parents. We appreciate that the current bill does indeed limit exceptions but would encourage the removal of the exception for emergencies, given the recommendations of school safety experts.

While we strongly support this effort to legislate phone-free schools in Wisconsin, we hope you will take advantage of the momentum that exists and join other jurisdictions in passing a strong "bell to bell" statewide phone free policy.

We have yet to find a school that earnestly tries to go phone free and regrets it. Students, teachers, and administrators are <u>reporting a wide range of</u> positive benefits, from in-person

socialization and laughter in the hallways to reduced distraction and improved student engagement.

We thank you for your efforts to protect kids in Wisconsin and would be glad to follow up further.

Jonathan Haidt Zach Rausch

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P.O. Box 3724 La Crosse, WI 54602 https://lacrossementalhealth.org



February 10, 2025

Committee on Science, Technology, and Al Representative Nate Gustafson

Dear Chairperson and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony related to Assembly Bill 2, which requires school boards to adopt policies prohibiting the use of wireless communication devices during instructional time. I submit these comments as an advocate for policies that prioritize student well-being, mental health, and academic success and as someone who believes that eliminating the distractions and harms caused by excessive smartphone use in educational settings should be a bipartisan issue.

Decades of research demonstrate that smartphones in schools are detrimental to students' learning, focus, and social development. Educators across our state report increased distractions, declining academic performance, and worsening mental health among students, all of which are linked to the overuse of mobile devices.

A phone-free school day policy allows students to be present in the moment, engage with their peers, and reduces dependence on digital validation. With phones out of reach, students develop essential interpersonal skills, form deeper relationships, and participate more actively in face-to-face interactions.

To ensure a comprehensive and effective phone-free school board policy, I believe legislation should include the following provisions:

- Prohibit the use of smartphones from the start of the school day until the final bell. Such a policy would not allow phone use during lunch, recess, or passing periods and would not make exceptions. Students should not have access to their phones during emergency situations because smartphone use can significantly undermine safety efforts by distracting students from safety instructions, disrupting emergency communication lines, and increasing the likelihood of rumors spreading, which can heighten risks.
- 2. Include a broad definition of wireless communication devices to encompass all Bluetooth devices, including smartwatches, headphones, and 'smart' vapes.
- 3. Encourage schools to implement secure storage solutions that ensure separation from devices for the entire school day.
- 4. Prohibit the use of social media platforms as the primary means of communication between schools, students, and parents.

I urge this committee to ensure that any potential legislation takes these points into account to create healthier school environments for all students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely