

Kevin Martian, PharmD

HB 1160

House Education Committee

01/15/2025

Dear Mr. Chairman and committee members,

As a father, business owner, and concerned citizen, I am writing to express my strong support for HB 1160 prohibiting student cellular telephone use during instructional time. This legislation represents a critical step forward in creating a more focused and effective learning environment for all students in North Dakota.

As discussed in Jonathan Haidt's comprehensive book, *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*, the mere presence of a smartphone—even when it is not actively in use—can significantly impair attention span, reduce cognitive performance, and increase anxiety. Numerous studies cited in Haidt's work demonstrate that the constant availability of a distraction disrupts deep learning and critical thinking, skills that are foundational to academic success and personal growth.

While some North Dakota schools and individual teachers have implemented thoughtful policies to limit smartphone use, these measures are inconsistent across districts and classrooms. This inconsistency leaves some children unprotected from the harmful effects of constant connectivity. HB 1160 would ensure uniformity and clarity, providing all students with an environment conducive to concentration, academic engagement, and meaningful social interactions.

It is important to recognize that while adults often struggle with overuse of technology, the impact on children is far more profound. Adolescents are in their most formative years, developing essential social skills, emotional regulation, and learning habits. The habitual interruptions caused by phones undermine these developmental processes at a time when they are most vulnerable to external influences.

I also urge thoughtful consideration for students with medical conditions or disabilities requiring technological accommodations. For instance, students with Type 1 diabetes often rely on smartphone-integrated devices to monitor glucose levels and manage insulin pumps. Policies should explicitly permit the use of such technology for medical purposes while maintaining restrictions on other non-educational uses. This balance would ensure necessary medical support without compromising the intent of the legislation.

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Throughout my conversations with fellow parents and educators, I have encountered overwhelming support for measures to curb classroom cellphone use. Many share a common frustration with the persistent distractions that phones introduce into learning environments, and they express strong interest in seeing clear, enforceable guidelines adopted statewide.

Ultimately, I believe HB 1160, with appropriate amendments to address medical and disability-related exceptions, is a step in the right direction to safeguard students' right to a focused and enriching education. By reducing the omnipresent pull of technology, this bill would empower children to think, learn, and grow without the relentless competition for their attention.

I respectfully encourage you to support this bill and take a decisive step toward fostering healthier, more focused learning environments for North Dakota's students. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kevin Martian, PharmD