

House Education Committee
Jan 15th, 2025 HB 1160
Testimony in Opposition

Dear Chair Heinert and the members of the House Education Committee,

I urge a “Do Not Pass” on HB 1160

I understand the frustration that we hear about within the state as it relates to cell phone use within the classroom. I have been following the research on it for the last few years, and if asked, I would say that a cell phone ban would ultimately do more good than it would harm.

Phones by themselves can open youth up to bullying, developing unhealthy parasocial relationships, or a dependency on the device. Not strictly the phones, but there is very clear research indicating the psychological harm of certain apps in perpetuating unrealistic body standards for young girls who struggle already with mental health and anxiety.

One could very easily google this topic to become convinced the answer is to remove the device entirely and immediately. Yet, when I said these bans would do more good than it would harm, what I want to focus on is the word harm.

Students who don't right now have any other access to support, who use their devices to dissociate or cope because they struggle with high levels of trauma or suicidality. There are many students who won't suddenly become attentive because their phone is gone, but instead disruptive.

I don't have the answers, but I don't think anyone does right now. I would strongly caution taking phones away without clear plans to replace the emotional support they do provide to some students. I would prefer this was a local issue, even if it was mandatory for each school board to create a policy around this. I would also prefer we did a study into it first.

My work is suicide prevention, so I think about the kids who struggle with that more than anything. And when I think about the complaints we have around phones, I very often see it as generational tension and anxiety that projects the modern problems our youth face through the culprit of new technology.

We do need to figure this modern challenge out in a way to maximize the benefits and reduce the consequences of phone use, but I don't think a blanket ban achieves this.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our state,
Faye Seidler