



# North Dakota Senate

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## Senator Mike Wobbema

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## COMMITTEES:

Education  
Workforce Development (Chair)

29 January 2025

Chairman Beard and members of the Senate Education Committee. For the record, I am Senator Mike Wobbema, District 24.

This past summer and fall, I attended conferences that spoke to the issue of students having access to personal electronic devices in school. It was a topic of special emphasis, expressing the level of concern, and desire for solutions. The results of reducing, or eliminating, the use of those devices in schools has shown positive and promising results.

Social media organizations have admitted that their products are intended to be addicting. Data shows that the average American teen spends nearly 5 hours a day on social media, usually on their phones, often in schools. Spending three or more hours a day on social media doubles kids' risk of mental health problems. Since smartphones became widespread, suicide rates have tripled among teens, self-harm among girls has gone up nearly 200%, and depression among teenagers has increased 150%.(1) Further, school leaders have also told us that there is a need for more mental health services.(2) A shortage of mental health professionals makes addressing this trend even more difficult. School halls are quiet as students shuffle from one class to another with their eyes glued to a screen. To quote US Surgeon General, Vevek Murthy; "We are in the middle of a national youth mental health crisis, and I am concerned that social media is an important driver of that crisis -- one that we must urgently address." From School Climate & Safety; "Digital distractions in class linked to lower academic performance." From NEA News; "The Epidemic of Anxiety Among Today's Students: By high school and college, many students have run out of steam. Anxiety -- the mental-health tsunami of their generation -- has caught up with them. And from an article by Sarah P. Weeldreyer; "Social media and smartphones have tipped an entire generation into anxiety and depression. Is there anything to be done?"

But there are success stories out there. At these conferences, story after story told of significant improvement of student engagement when personal electronic devices were secured. Mental health issues reduced, personal interaction increased and improved, participation in class improved, there was an increase in engagement in school activities such as clubs and sports, academic progress improved, and the general mood in the whole school was noticeably more positive. Just yesterday, I spoke with the Superintendent of the Valley City Public School system. They have implemented a no phone policy, and the results have been very promising. Even the students have come to him expressing their appreciation for implementing their program. But we must do more.

Addiction by its very nature requires intervention of some sort. An addict isn't capable of self-control in eliminating or reducing their need for a fix. For some students, merely saying that they must turn off their personal electronic devices or leave them in their locker won't be the necessary step to gain compliance. They can't help it... By taking the steps outlined in SB 2300, we set the stage for our students' success in improving so many aspects of their lives that cause us concern and are the subject of discussion in these halls. This is a Bill about our students. Their mental health, their academic success, their ability to positively interact with each other and society, along with other concerns we frequently strive to address in the halls of the State Legislature.

By enacting the requirements of this piece of legislation, we are setting the stage for improving personal responsibility as the student retains their own personal electronic devices in a secure inaccessible container. We take the burden of control of these valuable assets out of the hands of a teacher or school administration, thereby reducing stress on both ends. Other concerns such as security and access between parent and child are diversions from the real issue. Having access to personal electronic devices is not a necessity and presents the probability of being a hindrance in either of these cases. This Bill is not intended to restrict legitimate necessary access during the school day for those students who may need unique consideration. On the other hand Is it perfect? Probably not. In that light, I offer an amendment to fix some errors of omission that have been brought to my attention. Sometimes we must make hard decisions here. I strongly believe this is one of those times. SB 2300 does that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I will stand for any questions.

1: Letter from Governor of Arkansas, Sarah Huckabee Sanders to Arkansas Superintendents

2: Ibid

Offered Amendment to SB2300:

**P1.L12-13** -- Change to: 2. The superintendent of public instruction shall provide a school with a secure container that permits the student to retain possession of their personal electronic device for the duration of the schoolday.

**P1.L18** -- Consider striking 4. Completely -- or change "may" to "shall"

**P1.L19** -- Change "may" to "shall"

**P1.L21** -- Change "may" to "shall"

**P2.L3** -- Insert: 7. (Or change 6. to add "a.", "b.", etc... and reword accordingly) A school principal shall permit a student to access their personal electronic device as necessary and according to a student's individualized education program or plan developed under section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 [29 U.S.C.794], or other relevant federal law.

# PHONE-FREE EDUCATION ACROSS THE NATION

## AMERICA'S SCHOOLS ARE GOING PHONE-FREE

The push to create a phone-free education for students in grades K-12 is accelerating nationwide, with states rolling out laws and funding to address mental health concerns, safety, and the need to boost overall academic performance.

For over 10 years, Yondr has been instrumental in creating phone-free schools. We have partnered with educators in all 50 states and in more than 35 countries. Millions of students use Yondr every day.

School partners that implement the Yondr Program as recommended report dramatic improvements in student behavior and well-being.

“

“We saw drastic changes in engagement levels. Student disengagement dropped from 20% to around 8%.”

— James Villa,  
Principal,  
La Vega High School,  
Texas

“Yondr pouches were one small step that has led to big changes in the climate and culture of our schools.”

— Mit Foley,  
Assistant Superintendent,  
Saginaw Public Schools,  
Michigan

“I feel like I have a chance as a teacher now. Before, it was like, it doesn't really matter what I do, they're not listening or watching.”

— Laura Leonard,  
Teacher,  
Glenciff Public Schools,  
Tennessee

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## RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION

Yondr partners commit to an all day phone-free practice model. Our unique, lockable pouch means that students keep their phones on their person, but cannot access it for the full school day. Teachers no longer have to be the phone police, and students get a much needed 6-8 hour break from digital distractions.

**MILLIONS OF STUDENTS USE YONDR EVERY DAY**  
**VISIT [EVERYONDR.COM/PHONE-FREE-SCHOOLS](https://everyondr.com/phone-free-schools) TO LEARN MORE**

## WITH YONDR, IT'S MORE THAN JUST A POUCH

All Yondr partners receive a proven program, patented products, and best-in-class support. All of these components work together to support you in creating a phone-free school or district for students.



### PHONE-FREE EQUIPMENT

These tools will help your students avoid distractions and stay engaged during class.

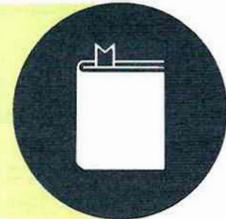
- Student Pouches
- Medical Pouches
- Unlocking Bases
- Handheld Magnets
- Storage Equipment
- Magnet Lockbox



### TRAINING & SUPPORT

Regular meetings throughout the year with your Yondr Team ensure program success.

- Pre-Implementation Planning
- Pre-Launch Check-In
- Post-Launch Check-In
- Mid-Year Success Check-In
- End-of-Year Review and Planning



### CURRICULUM RESOURCES

The Yondr Program includes additional resources teachers and parents can use to continue building healthy digital habits with students.

- Customizable Presentations, Videos, and Handouts
- Lesson Plans
- Phone-Free Activity Guides

 **common sense media**

## PHONE-FREE FOCUS, PROVEN RESULTS

**15%** Increase in the probability of passing grades.

**44%** Decrease in average monthly behavioral referrals.

\*Independent Study Results

**84%**

Saw a positive change in student engagement.

**72%**

Saw a positive change in student behavior.

**68%**

Saw a positive change in academic performance.

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