KANSAS STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Neutral Testimony for SB 350
Senate Committee on Education
Frank Harwood, Deputy Commissioner
Kansas State Department of Education

Chair Erickson and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding Senate Bill 350 related to student use of school owned electronic devices.

Over the last few years, both the Kansas State Board of Education and local boards of education have been studying student screen time during school hours. This has involved both student personal electronic devices and school owned electronic devices. Although the use of electronic devices has become an integral part of the school day, some school districts have begun to limit screen time, especially at the earlier grades.

It is important for the legislature to understand the ramifications a unilateral policy limiting or prohibiting the use of electronic devices will have. One area that will be significantly impacted will be required assessments. A ban on using electronic devices at the elementary level will make it impossible to implement the state assessment and required reading screeners in the 2026-27 school year. Kansas has not used a paper and pencil state assessment for all students since 2012. The current state assessment uses technology enhanced items that cannot be administered in a paper version. Banning electronic devices would necessitate the creation of a new paper-based state assessment that is aligned to the curricular standards in place in July of 2024. Additionally, the approved screeners given three times a year to measure risk of dyslexia are computer adaptive tests that cannot be administered with a paper version.

Prohibiting or limiting screen time will also require districts to move away from computer based educational interventions including IXL Math (the virtual math programs funded by the legislature). At the high school level, districts may need to discontinue some or all remote learning classes which will severely limit curricular offerings in smaller and more remote school settings.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on SB 350. Although the State Board and local boards are working to be less reliant on electronic devices in education, it is important to know that statewide policy may not be flexible enough to address the wide ranging needs of Kansas students, differences among school districts and the reliance on technology in society.

For more information, contact:

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