March 2nd, 2026

Members of the Senate Education Committee,

First and foremost, thank you for your service to the State of Kansas and our schools. As I see the number, and depth, of Bills in Committee, it's fairly overwhelming. I'll pray that you have the stamina and mental clarity to navigate this legislative session and make strong choices for the kids, parents, and schools across our state.

My name is Matt Brownlee, and I am writing as a proponent of SB 350. My perspective here is that of a father-of-four, a CYO coach (cross-country, basketball, track), an entrepreneur, and proudly – a child of the 80's and 90's.

When the topic of "screens in schools" hit my radar, I was admittedly a bit apathetic. I grew up playing Oregon Trail in computer lab, learned my home row keys as a 7th grader, and would relish the days when the substitute teacher in Civics class would lazily toss in the most recent VHS recording of a 'West Wing' episode.

The inconvenient truth, however, is that the electronic devices of my children's generation are not only more technologically advanced than ours, but far more devious in their programming and implementation. The software engineers and social psychologists who build the apps, sites, and devices for Kansas' kids do not have their educational outcomes at the top of their minds. Their focus is on persuasive design, intended to addict users at a young age in order to ensure customers for life. Bake in the sober realities around how our children's data is being collected, sold, and studied, and you have a recipe for short & long-term ripple effects. All this aimed at innocent K-12 kids who are involved in an unfair fight against dopamine and Big Tech orgs that are quite literally using the same playbook that tobacco companies executed in the 20th century.

The science is on this front is quite clear, not really debatable, and I'm hopeful you'll hear testimonies from experts who are far more knowledgeable in that space than myself. For that reason, I'll conclude here by pivoting to a different topic, which may or may not be relatable to the constituents whom you serve: Change Management.

I want to offer a measure of empathy to each of you that this is not necessarily the path of least resistance. It would be easier to give the kids their iPads, Chromebooks, YouTube logins, etc. You are bound to hear arguments related to "local control," or perhaps "freedom of choice."

These positions are a bit more convenient, but it doesn't make them right for our kids, our schools, even our teachers. Kids, even adults, crave boundaries. We love clarity. And the correct path forward here seems quite clear to all of those who have invested the time to understand the factors at play, and the risks of inaction.

Ensuring age-appropriate devices are used, and hopefully sparingly at that, isn't an undue punishment for anyone. It's actually a gift that most kids would never think to ask for – yet they know in it's the right thing to do. They really do.

Kids are smart enough to know that screens aren't great for them, just like they know that ice cream for dinner isn't healthy. But it doesn't mean they won't keep asking for it, until they realize that our resolve – as leaders and adults – is stronger than theirs. Then, after brief adjustment period, healthy habits will become the new normal, the opposition will fade away, and our future selves will all be better for having taken a stand.

We have the knowledge, and God willing, a bit of wisdom. All we must do now is have the courage to act upon it. Not out of hubris, but out of service for them, because they deserve it, and so does Kansas' future.

Thank you,

Matt Brownlee
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