

Dear Committee Members,

I write today in strong support of legislation to prohibit student cell phone use during the school day.

This bill is about one thing above all else: restoring the classroom as a place for learning, focus, and healthy social development. Over the last decade, smartphones have quietly become one of the most disruptive forces in our schools, pulling attention away from instruction, fueling anxiety, amplifying bullying, and placing teachers in the impossible role of constant phone enforcement rather than educators.

Teachers across Kansas tell us the same story. Too much instructional time is lost managing phones, asking students to put them away, confiscating them, dealing with videos being recorded, photos being shared, and conflicts escalating online during the school day. That time should be spent teaching, mentoring, and supporting students.

The impact on students is just as serious. Research and real-world experience show that constant phone access contributes to increased anxiety, decreased attention span, social isolation, and cyberbullying. During school hours, phones expose students to risks they should not be navigating in a classroom including online trafficking, drug access, harassment, and harmful content.

Importantly, this legislation does not prevent parents from reaching their children in emergencies. Schools have always had and will continue to have clear communication systems for urgent situations. What this bill does is ensure that fear driven exceptions do not outweigh the daily, documented harm caused by unrestricted phone use.

Concerns about local control are understandable, but when the well-being, mental health, and academic success of our children are at stake, the Legislature has both the authority and the responsibility to act. We already set statewide standards for safety, attendance, and curriculum. Creating a phone-free school day is no different, it is a baseline expectation in the best interest of students.

Other states and school districts that have implemented bell to bell or all day phone bans are already seeing positive results: improved student engagement, stronger peer relationships, reduced disciplinary incidents, and classrooms that feel calmer and more focused. Kansas students deserve the same opportunity to learn without constant digital distraction.

This bill is not anti-technology. It is pro-student. It recognizes that childhood, learning, and social development require boundaries and that school should be a place where students can be present, connected, and safe.

I urge you to support this legislation and stand with educators, parents, and students who want our schools to be places of learning, not screens.

Respectfully,

Angela Martinez
Kansas State Representative
House District 103