

Oral Opposition Testimony before the  
House Education Committee  
On  
HB 2421

Requiring school districts to prohibit the use of personal electronic communication device during school hours, prohibiting and employee of a school district from using social media to directly communicate with any student for official school purposes and requiring school districts to report on the amount of screen time that certain students experience during a typical school day.

by  
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Chair Estes and members of the House Education committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to **House Bill 2421**, which would require school districts to prohibit student use of personal electronic communication devices during school hours, restrict employee communication with students via social media, and mandate reporting on screen time for students in kindergarten through grade four.

While we support thoughtful efforts to promote student focus, safety, and healthy technology use, **HB 2421 imposes broad, rigid, and state-mandated rules that limit local flexibility, create operational burdens, and risk unintended harm to instruction, safety, and student well-being.**

#### **One-Size-Fits-All Mandate Undermines Local Control**

Kansas school districts already maintain policies governing cell phones and personal devices. These policies vary because **local communities, grade levels, instructional models, and student needs differ.**

HB 2421 replaces district discretion with a statewide mandate, reducing the ability of schools to:

- Adjust policies by age or grade
- Support instructional uses of technology
- Respond to unique safety or accessibility needs
- Pilot innovative learning models
- Local boards and educators are best positioned to determine what works for their students.

#### **Technology Is an Instructional Tool, Not Only a Distraction**

- Personal electronic devices are increasingly used for:
- Classroom polling and interactive lessons
- Translation and accessibility tools
- Assistive technology for students with disabilities
- Digital textbooks and academic research
- Emergency communication and safety coordination
- A blanket prohibition risks **disrupting modern teaching practices** and limiting support for students who rely on digital tools.

### **Enforcement Creates New Discipline Burdens**

- Strict bans may unintentionally:
- Increase student discipline referrals
- Escalate minor behavior issues into punitive consequences
- Disproportionately affect low-income students or students with disabilities
- Shift staff time away from instruction toward enforcement
- Schools should prioritize **teaching responsible use**, not expanding disciplinary systems.

### **Social Media Communication Restrictions May Impair Student Support**

- HB 2421 limits school employees from communicating with students through social media for official purposes, except in narrow circumstances .
- This may:
- Complicate outreach to students involved in extracurriculars
- Limit communication with students in remote or blended learning settings
- Reduce the ability of counselors, coaches, and mentors to maintain safe, documented contact channels
- Rather than an outright ban, **clear professional communication standards and oversight** are more effective.

### **Screen-Time Reporting Adds Administrative Work Without Clear Benefit**

- The bill requires districts to **track and report average screen time for K–4 students**.
- However:
- There is no standardized method to measure screen time
- Reporting may require new data systems or staff time
- The requirement does not provide funding or clarity on how data will be used (unfunded mandate)
- The policy risks becoming a compliance exercise rather than a meaningful educational improvement

We respectfully urge the Committee to **reject HB 2421** or significantly amend it to:

- Preserve **local decision-making authority**
- Avoid rigid statewide bans
- Support responsible technology use rather than punitive enforcement
- Prevent unfunded mandates and unnecessary reporting burdens
- Grandfather in schools and districts that have already have a workable policy in place

Kansas schools need flexibility to balance student focus, safety, innovation, and instructional quality — not another prescriptive state mandate.

Thank you for your time and consideration.