

Testimony to the House Education Committee

February 6, 2026

Bill HB 2421 Opponent

Ashley Barlow, Concerned Parent

ashsbarlow@gmail.com

Chair & Members of the Committee,

I'm writing to voice my opposition to bill HB 2421.

Kansas PTA's position reflects an important principle: locally elected school boards and communities are best equipped to craft policies that reflect the needs of their students, staff, and families. Most districts across Kansas, including Shawnee Mission, already have cell phone policies in place. ***These locally developed policies allow districts to adjust as they gather feedback and learn what works. That flexibility simply does not exist in state law.***

Both SMAC and Kansas PTA support districts in enacting and enforcing their own policies, and we encourage parents to work with their schools when improvements are needed. The legislature should respect the authority of our state and local elected school boards rather than replace local decision-making with a one-size-fits-all mandate.

Additionally, these bills create an unfunded mandate. Because the proposed legislation requires phones to be stored securely and inaccessible to students, the practical storage solutions currently used in SMSD—such as backpacks, lockers, or classroom caddies—would no longer comply. Districts would be forced to find and fund new storage solutions without any state support, and as of late, we already know the state is NOT supporting education through proposed other bills.

SMSD has also formally opposed these bills in testimony for SB 302, citing many of these same concerns.

Do what's right and please vote **NO** on bill HB 2421.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Ashley Barlow
Concerned Parent
Overland Park

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Colleen Cunningham

TITLE: Kansas Parent & Former Teacher

EMAIL ADDRESS: colleen@demod.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill HB2421

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written Only

DATE OF HEARING: January 16, 2026

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing today as a Kansas parent, as well as a former teacher, and am asking you to vote NO on HB2421.

Mandating that cell phones be “securely stored away from the student’s person” presents both logistical and financial challenges for schools. Our neighborhood public high school has around 1500 students, and most students do not have access to lockers. If this bill were to be implemented, students would spend a large amount of time waiting in line at the beginning and end of the day to turn in and retrieve their phones. For students who leave for appointments or lunch or off-campus classes, during the day, they would be forced to wait for staff to be available to retrieve their phone before leaving. Kansas public schools are already insufficiently funded to provide what is currently expected of them. Demanding that schools provide “a secure, lockable pouch, phone locker or other inaccessible location” without an appropriate increase in funding is an unfunded mandate, and is not prudent.

The current reality is that local school districts already can, and have, put cell phone bans in place which reflect their community’s needs, with input from local stakeholders. Our family’s school district put a cell phone ban into place at the start of this school year. It has rules that vary, and are developmentally appropriate, by grade level, allowing 18-year-old high school seniors more freedom than 6th graders, for example. HB2421 does not acknowledge differing developmental and logistical needs of students. When we attended Back to School Night at our kids’ middle and high schools, administrators and teachers across the board were very positive about our district’s then-new technology policy. School boards across the state, whose constituents have demanded a technology policy, have put such a policy into place. Those who haven’t are free to do so, if their community requests it. This is most appropriately addressed by local school boards.

Finally, I share concerns regarding increases in anxiety disorders, depression and suicide among Kansas youth, and do advocacy work on these issues. I have a young family member who struggles with such an anxiety disorder, and having their cell phone accessible at school is one of the few things that decreases their anxiety to a level that they are able to attend school at all. This has been a godsend at times when they can feel a panic attack coming on, and staff members are not available, or sufficiently educated on topics related to mental health, to support them at that time. Instead, they are able to send me a text that they are struggling, and I can talk them through it, which allows them to return to learning more quickly, or at least makes them less distracting to peers. While HB2421 allows for students with a 504 Plan to have an exception to the required safe storage, having a 504 Plan requires: adults who recognize symptoms of issues that fall under the guidelines of a 504 Plan and are willing to acknowledge the severity of symptoms, IF their child is

willing to disclose symptoms; a physician or other medical professional who can recognize such a disorder; multiple meetings and paperwork done by school administrators and parents; and communication (which often discloses their disability) to all teachers, every semester, that this exception exists in their 504 Plan. I know that there are students in my kids' schools who are missing one or more of the pieces needed to access the exception in this bill, and who will be unable to comfortably attend school without the exception. Rather than this legislation to address student mental health and suicide, it would be far more effective for the legislature to fully fund our public schools, including special education, so that they can increase mental health supports; provide increased funding to public health service organizations which address mental health; pass safe firearm storage bills, as 46% of all gun deaths among children and teens in Kansas are suicides (compared with 29% nationally), and research shows that the firearms used in these suicides and suicide attempts are most often accessed while unsecured from a friend or family member's home. Rather than helping student mental health, this legislation will have a negative impact on students who are already managing mental illness.

I appreciate your time and attention regarding HB2421 and would again urge you to vote NO.

Colleen Cunningham
Overland Park



**Judith Deedy on behalf of
Game On for Kansas Schools
jgdeedy@gmail.com
Opponent Testimony**

HB 2421

**AN ACT concerning education; relating to school districts and accredited nonpublic schools;
prohibiting students from using personal electronic communication devices during school hours;
prohibiting school employees from communicating with students via social media platforms for
official school purposes and providing certain exceptions;**

In the House Education Committee

February 6, 2026

Chair Estes, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to HB 2421 on behalf of Game On for Kansas Schools, a grassroots public education advocacy organization.

There is broad agreement that cell phones can be a major distraction in schools. That is why the majority of school districts in Kansas have already enacted policies restricting their use. We oppose HB 2421 because it fails to respect the decisions of local school boards that have already enacted policies, its storage requirements are burdensome and expensive, and the prohibition on the use of social media platforms to communicate with students is overly broad.

As currently written, HB 2421 would require all personal electronic communication devices to be turned off and securely stored in an inaccessible location away from a student's person from the beginning of the school day until dismissal. The bill strongly suggests the use of lockable pouches or phone lockers, creating significant logistical challenges and new costs for districts. In enacting this language, Kansas would be an outlier. Only two states—North Dakota and Rhode Island—have language requiring phones to be “inaccessible” to students, but evidence from even those states suggests that backpacks and lockers satisfy that requirement. Kansas could become the only state in the nation effectively requiring districts to purchase expensive storage equipment. Most states take a more flexible approach. Among the 34 states with phone-free laws:

- Some require districts to adopt a policy but leave implementation decisions to local leaders.
- Many restrict phones only during instructional time.
- Others impose bell-to-bell restrictions but allow phones to be stored in backpacks or lockers.
- Several allow teacher or school board discretion.

Neighboring states provide especially relevant comparisons. Missouri and Oklahoma have bell-to-bell policies that allow phones to be stored in backpacks or lockers, and Nebraska's law allows school board

exceptions. In practice, many Nebraska districts limit bell-to-bell bans to K–8 and restrict phones in high schools only during class time. Oklahoma also provides grants to districts that choose to purchase secure storage equipment—an option not included in HB 2421.

The fiscal impact of HB 2421 is significant. While the state fiscal note lists a zero-dollar cost to the state, this bill would impose an unfunded mandate on school districts. Using a conservative estimate of \$30 per lockable pouch, the Department of Budget estimates statewide implementation costs at approximately \$13.4 million. For individual districts, that could mean:

- Wichita: \$1.35 million
- Olathe: \$840,000
- Shawnee Mission: \$780,000
- Manhattan: \$210,000

These costs would be absorbed by districts already struggling with substantial shortfalls in special education funding from both the state and federal governments.

There are also serious logistical concerns. In large schools, the time required for students and staff to lock and unlock devices, manage check-in and check-out procedures, and handle exceptions throughout the day could result in meaningful losses of instructional time. There would be significant liability concerns as districts become responsible for storage of cell phones, iPads, ear buds and Apple watches. There is also evidence that expensive storage systems are often ineffective, as students quickly find ways around them.

Finally, HB 2421 removes flexibility from districts that already have effective cell phone policies in place. For communities where parents, students, and educators agree that current approaches are working, it is difficult to justify forcing new expenditures and operational burdens that may offer little additional benefit. If individual parents are not satisfied, they should reach out to their local boards and seek changes. It is also important to note that cell phones are generally not required for school, and no one is stopping individual parents who seek broader limitations to simply not allow their own children to take their phone to school or allow them to access their phones while at school.

The ban on using social media to communicate with students as drafted is unclear and overbroad. As written, it could exclude multiple legitimate tools used to communicate with the student body. Even apps like GroupMe are useful for communication with teams or groups of students participating in extracurricular activities. Coaches can try to email the team about a change in practice time, but students are much more likely to get the message via the GroupMe. These tools can be allowed while still prohibiting one-on-one communications between students and staff.

The legislature should respect the decisions of local school boards that have already passed cell phone policies. If the legislature wishes to mandate a policy, Kansas should look to neighboring states and align with approaches that are effective without creating unnecessary costs or administrative burdens. Districts should also be allowed flexibility to determine how phones are stored and whether additional equipment is truly necessary. We urge you to oppose HB 2421.



USD #377 - ATCHISON COUNTY COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

306 Main Street, PO Box 289
Effingham, Kansas 66023

Dr. Andrew K Gaddis
gaddis.andrew@usd377.org
(913)833-5050

HB 2421 Cell Phone Ban in Schools
Opposition - Written
1/16/2026

Chair Estes and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in opposition to House Bill 2421. I provide this testimony as Superintendent of USD 377 – Atchison County Community Schools. While the intent of HB 2421 is understood, the bill represents a significant departure from Kansas's long-standing commitment to local control in public education.

Kansas has consistently affirmed that locally elected boards of education, in partnership with administrators, educators, and families, are best positioned to make decisions that serve their students and communities. Districts across the state vary widely in size, demographics, resources, and student needs. A statewide mandate banning cell phones removes the flexibility districts need to establish policies aligned with local values, building culture, and grade-level appropriateness.

USD 377, like many Kansas districts, has adopted locally developed cell phone expectations designed to support safe, orderly, and effective learning environments. These policies allow school leaders to respond to instructional needs, student safety considerations, and parent expectations while maintaining accountability. House Bill 2421 would override these local decisions and replace them with a one-size-fits-all requirement that does not reflect the diverse realities of Kansas schools.

Preserving local control allows districts to adjust practices as student needs change, technology evolves, and community input is considered—flexibility that cannot be achieved through statute. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the House Education Committee to oppose House Bill 2421 and to uphold the principle of local control that has been foundational to the success of Kansas public education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Gaddis", is written over a faint, dotted-line grid. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Dr. Andrew K Gaddis, Superintendent
USD 377 – Atchison County Community Schools

Office of the Superintendent of Schools

Testimony to the House Education Committee

February 5, 2026

Bill HB2421 Opponent

Michele Shea Geist, KS Parent & Business Owner

sheageist@gmail.com

Chair & Members of the Committee,

I'm writing to voice my opposition to bill HB2421.

School districts create policies as needed and in response to the needs of the families in their district. Your one-size-fits-few flex is unnecessary. Children with medical needs should not be cut off from their parents or their medical monitoring phone apps. Parents should have the opportunity to check on the wellbeing and location of their children when they see fit. Children should have the opportunity to call their parents or 911 during a school shooting – as children did in Uvalde. Implementing this unfunded mandate will cost our school district up to \$700,000. It is a waste of money.

Please vote no on bill HB2421.

Shea Geist, KS Parent & Business Owner

Roeland Park, KS



KANSAS NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION / 715 SW 10TH AVENUE / TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1686

Timothy R. Graham
Director of Government Relations & Legislative Affairs
Oral Testimony – **Oppose**
House Bill 2421
House Committee on Education
February 6, 2026

Chairperson Estes, members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to HB 2421.

Kansas NEA is a member-driven organization representing nearly 22,000 educators across the state of Kansas. Our members are organized into more than 265 local associations and work in schools and communities across nearly all 105 Kansas counties, serving students in urban, suburban, and rural districts alike.

The positions we advocate for are proposed, debated, and adopted by hundreds of educators selected by their peers to attend our annual Representative Assembly, reflecting the collective voice of education professionals of all political parties, beliefs, and backgrounds who are united by a commitment to Kansas public schools and the students they serve.

In considering HB 2421, KNEA begins with an issue that consistently guides its advocacy: local control. In most cases—and KNEA believes in this case as well—decisions that directly affect students, classrooms, and daily school operations are best made by locally elected school boards working in partnership with their communities and educators. This issue is no different.

Nevertheless, the Legislature is sending a clear signal that it intends to act in this space. For that reason, KNEA believes it is important for educators to be at the table as a resource. In offering testimony on this bill, KNEA is not stepping away from its long-standing support for local control. Rather, KNEA is engaging because these decisions will have real, day-to-day consequences in schools, and there is value in helping ensure the outcomes are thoughtful, workable, and grounded in reality.

With that context, KNEA would like to briefly share several concerns from an educator perspective.

Confidentiality

Under HB 2421, students must qualify for an exception in order to use a personal device during the school day. In practice, that can require students to disclose learning disabilities or medical needs simply to comply with the law. That puts students and educators in uncomfortable positions and raises real concerns about privacy and dignity.

Family and Caretaker Realities

Some students—particularly older students—carry real responsibilities outside of school, including caring for younger siblings or responding to family emergencies. For those students, limited access to a phone during the day is not about distraction; it is about responsibility, communication, and safety.

Enforcement and Liability

The bill places enforcement squarely on schools but does not clearly define who is responsible. In reality, this responsibility will fall on teachers and school staff, often without clear guidance, legal protection, or consistent administrative support. That creates liability concerns and increases the likelihood of uneven enforcement.

Administrative Follow-Through

Educators have lived experience with policies that appear clear on paper but become inconsistent in practice. When enforcement breaks down, responsibility often shifts back into classrooms, creating unnecessary conflict between educators, students, and families.

Definition of Instructional Time

The definition of instructional time in HB 2421 is a significant concern. This is an area where KNEA believes local control should take precedence over a one-size-fits-all approach set in statute. Defining instructional time as the entire school day, including lunch, recess, and passing periods, is far too prescriptive and does not allow districts the flexibility needed to respond to the different needs of their communities. There are already school districts across Kansas with systems in place that are popular, effective, and working, and that reality should be taken into consideration.

Additionally, the concerns outlined above—student privacy and students serving as caregivers—would be better addressed with a less rigid, one-size-fits-all ban. Allowing local districts to make those determinations would go a long way toward easing these concerns, while also honoring the principle of local control.

Unfunded Mandate

HB 2421 also represents an unfunded mandate. Districts will be required to adopt policies, train staff, develop storage solutions, enforce compliance, and report to the state, all without additional funding to support those requirements.

Implementation Timeline

Another significant concern for KNEA is the implementation timeline, with required compliance by September 1, 2026. When complex policy changes are developed and implemented on an accelerated timeline, even when the utmost caution is exercised, unintended consequences are likely to occur. In the case of HB 2421, those unintended consequences have a strong potential to fall most heavily on educators, particularly given the enforcement, liability, and administrative challenges already outlined. Additional time and flexibility would allow districts to plan more thoughtfully, engage stakeholders, and avoid preventable issues that ultimately land in classrooms.



KANSAS NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION / 715 SW 10TH AVENUE / TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1686

Reason for Opposition to HB 2421

While KNEA previously testified neutral with concerns on the Senate version of this policy, HB 2421 includes an additional provision that moves us to opposition.

HB 2421 requires districts and accredited nonpublic schools to collect, report, and publicly publish data on the average amount of screen time experienced by students in kindergarten through fourth grade during a typical school day, including time spent on school-issued instructional devices. The bill further requires the State Department of Education to publish this information on its website.

KNEA believes this provision goes too far. It reduces complex instructional decisions to a single metric, invites public misinterpretation of classroom practice, and places additional reporting burdens on schools without context, resources, or demonstrated educational benefit.

For that reason, this reporting and publication requirement is the basis for KNEA's opposition to HB 2421.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in opposition to HB 2421.

Jan. 12, 2026

Dear Members of the Kansas Legislature,

I am writing to provide written testimony in opposition to HB 2421 and SB302, which would require school districts to submit documentation regarding student screen time.

While I appreciate the Legislature's interest in student well-being and learning conditions, this bill represents an unnecessary layer of legislative oversight into matters that are already appropriately addressed at the local level. Decisions related to instructional practices, technology use, and student behavior are best made by local boards of education in partnership with educators, families, and community members who know their students and schools best.

In our district, we have already adopted and implemented a bell-to-bell cell phone policy. This policy is being followed and respected by staff, students, and parents alike. It has been effective without the need for additional reporting requirements or state-level monitoring. Our experience mirrors that of many Kansas school districts that have established local policies addressing screen use in ways that fit their communities.

Requiring districts to submit documentation on screen time would divert time and energy away from the core work of teaching and learning. School leaders and educators are already managing significant reporting and compliance responsibilities. Adding another mandate does not improve student outcomes and instead pulls attention away from more pressing needs.

If the Legislature wishes to focus its efforts on issues that would have a meaningful and immediate impact on Kansas students, fully funding special education remains a critical and unmet obligation. Addressing this long-standing challenge would provide direct support to students, families, and school districts across the state.

I respectfully urge you to oppose HB2421 and SB302 and to continue to honor the principle of local control that has long guided effective public education in Kansas. Local school districts are capable, responsible, and already taking appropriate action in this area.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Deena Hilbig
Superintendent, USD 327



USD 327 DISTRICT OFFICE

145 W 15th Street, PO BOX 306, Ellsworth, KS 67439
785-472-5561 | usd327.org

Subject: Written Testimony in Opposition to SB 302

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education

NAME: Chris Huff

TITLE: Kansas Parent

EMAIL ADDRESS: chris@chris-huff.com

BILL NUMBER: SB 302

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written Only

DATE OF HEARING: January 15, 2026

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

I am writing to respectfully oppose SB 302, which would mandate bell-to-bell personal device bans in all Kansas schools.

I want to be clear at the outset: I do **not** oppose schools restricting student phone use during instructional time. Many educators report that phones are disruptive, and the evidence supports that removing phones from classrooms can improve focus and learning conditions. Schools absolutely need the authority to manage their learning environments.

My concern is with a **statewide mandate** that treats bell-to-bell bans as a comprehensive solution to problems that extend far beyond the school day and beyond schools' realistic control.

The Blue Ribbon Task Force report that informs this bill devotes significant attention to youth mental health, anxiety, depression, sleep deprivation, social media harms, and long-term well-being. These are serious and real concerns — but they are driven primarily by **out-of-school behavior**, family norms, and platform-level incentives, not by what happens between first and last bell.

The research base shows a clear distinction that matters for policy:

- There is reasonably strong evidence that phones distract students and disrupt learning during class.
- There is **much weaker evidence** that banning phones at school, by itself, improves overall mental health, sleep, or long-term self-regulation.
- The best available studies suggest that when phones are restricted during school hours alone, students often compensate with increased use after school, leaving total screen exposure unchanged.

In other words, school bans may protect instructional time — which is important — but they are **not demonstrated mental-health interventions**, and they do not reliably teach students how to regulate technology use once the restriction is removed.

That distinction matters because SB 302 would impose a uniform mandate while implicitly promising outcomes it cannot deliver on its own.

I am also concerned about unintended long-term effects. Adolescence is a developmental period when self-regulation is still forming. Research consistently shows that durable self-control is learned through **scaffolding and gradual autonomy**, not through permanent external control alone. If students are never given structured opportunities to practice responsible use — paired with guidance, feedback, and parental alignment — we risk solving a short-term classroom problem while leaving students unprepared for environments like college and the workforce, where no such bans exist.

Finally, a statewide mandate places enforcement burdens on schools without guaranteeing the funding, staffing, or parent coordination necessary for success. Educators are right to want phones out of classrooms — but it is not reasonable to ask schools to carry sole responsibility for a problem that is largely societal and home-based.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to reject SB 302 in its current form and instead:

- Preserve **local control** so districts can tailor policies to their communities.
- Frame school phone restrictions honestly as **learning-environment protections**, not cures for the youth mental health crisis.
- Encourage — rather than mandate — complementary approaches, including parent engagement and age-appropriate instruction in digital self-regulation.

This is not an argument against boundaries. It is an argument against oversimplifying a complex developmental issue into a single statewide mandate.

Thank you for your time and for your service to Kansas students and families.

Respectfully,

Chris Huff

Testimony to the House Education Committee

NAME: Kelly Johnson

TITLE: Parent

EMAIL ADDRESS: Kelly_Zita@hotmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill HB 2421

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written

DATE OF HEARING: January 16, 2026

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my opposition to Kansas House Bill 2421.

Decisions about student cell phone use and device storage are best made at the local school district level, not mandated by the State. School districts differ widely in size, building design, staffing, and student needs. Local administrators and school boards are far better positioned to determine policies that work for their specific communities.

Mandating device storage creates significant logistical challenges for many schools. Secure storage requires physical space, staffing oversight, and clear procedures to prevent loss, theft, or damage. For schools that were not designed with this purpose in mind, these requirements are neither simple nor inexpensive.

Additionally, HB 2421 effectively creates an unfunded mandate. Requiring districts to provide secure device storage without corresponding funding shifts costs onto local taxpayers or already-strained school budgets. Those resources would be better spent on instruction, student support services, and classroom needs.

Most school districts already have policies in place addressing cell phone use, and many continue to refine them based on experience and community feedback. Preserving local control allows districts to respond flexibly and responsibly without imposing a one-size-fits-all solution.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to oppose HB 2421 and allow school districts to retain authority over these decisions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kelly Johnson
Gardner, KS

Ann E. Mah, Retiree

Email: annmah@att.net

HB 2421: Use of personal electronic communication devices during school hours

Opponent testimony

In-person

Friday, January 16, 2026

Chair Estes and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to HB 2421 on behalf of myself as a former state representative and former state board of education member. HB 2421 is an attempt to usurp the constitutional authority of local boards of education in the areas of personal electronic devices and teacher-student communications.

While everything in this bill might or might not be a good idea, the fact is that it is not the job of the legislature to set these policies. According to Article 6 of the Kansas State Constitution, Article 5, "Local public schools under the general supervision of the state board of education shall be maintained, developed and operated by locally elected boards."

Do the state board of education and legislature have a role in policy? Yes. The state board of education has general supervision of K-12 public schools. It also accredits public and private schools. The legislature has the job of making suitable provision for finance of the educational interest of the state.

In 2024, the state board of education established a Blue Ribbon Task Force on Student Screen Time. They were tasked with providing recommendations regarding the use of personal devices in school, screen time and mental health, and parental oversight of district-owned devices. Three dozen key stakeholders made recommendations in a report to the board. That report was received by the state board of education and distributed to the local boards of education for their consideration. The board was glad to do the research and lay out the pros and cons for local boards to review. The result is that now 240 districts have policies related to personal devices, which makes this bill even more unnecessary and intrusive.

I was on the board for that discussion and vote. While we often got into discussions with local boards over where the line of control should be drawn between us, it was clear to the state board that a mandate was not in order. The Kansas Supreme Court ruled that the authority of the board as something more than "to advise and confer" and something less than "to control". The Court noted the line of demarcation cannot be drawn with "fine precision". (*State ex rel Miller v Board of Education, 1973*) That line is between the state and local boards. There is no "line" between the legislature and local boards other than funding.

It should be clear that these discussions belong at that level. It should also be clear the legislature has no role here. When you have school districts that range from fewer than one hundred students to more than 45,000 students, there is no way the legislature can create a “one-size-fits-all” solution. Besides that, I’m fairly certain that the 2000 or so locally elected school board members are in a better position than you to make that call. What message are you sending your local board members? They likely already have a policy, but you think you know better? Seriously?

It just makes far more sense for the local board to work with students, educators, and parents to devise a local policy on personal devices and teacher-student communications. Those closest to the situation should make the call. They may very well decide that it is better to teach students how to properly use those devices rather than hiding them. And Heaven help you if this passes and students are harmed in some kind of disaster at school because communications devices were not readily available. Further, if the local board decides not to have a policy, it is still not your job to override that decision.

Of course, not to be outdone by the Senate, the House included provisions for another report requirement. As I testified a couple of years ago, putting report requirements into statute is unnecessary and a waste of resources. If you want to know something, just ask the education department. They will work with you. Long after you have lost interest, this will still be in statute, wasting time and money. Besides that, the information relevant to this issue will change in about 30 minutes, but that language will last forever. Be smarter.

I would be glad to stand for questions.

Testimony to the House Education Committee
February 6, 2026

Opponent Written Testimony on HB 2421

Danielle Martinez
Parent of two K-12 children
daniemku@gmail.com

Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of my family, I submit this testimony in opposition to HB 2421.

While I recognize the intent of this bill to reduce distractions in schools, it focuses on a narrow policy choice while ignoring the far more urgent reality facing our students. We are living in a time of increased aggression, instability, and state and non-state violence across our country. Schools are not immune from this reality. In this environment, constant and immediate communication between parents and children is not optional; it is essential to their safety.

Until the Legislature meaningfully addresses gun violence and other proven school safety measures, removing students' access to personal communication devices for the entire school day creates serious and unnecessary risks. In an emergency or active threat situation, preventing students from contacting their parents or first responders does not make schools safer. In fact, it makes them more dangerous. Without comprehensive prevention efforts in place, a tragedy under this proposal is not speculative; it is foreseeable and preventable.

HB 2421 also imposes a significant unfunded mandate on school districts already under severe financial strain. The bill requires secure, inaccessible storage of devices but provides no funding to implement it, forcing districts to divert scarce education dollars at a time when special education remains chronically underfunded and inflation continues to erode school budgets. Families already shoulder substantial costs for public education through taxes and increasingly high school fees. Against this backdrop, the Legislature's willingness to entertain massive public expenditures to attract a professional sports franchise, while offering no funding for a mandate imposed on our schools, is a contrast that is neither lost on me nor on the parents and voters in my district.

Bottom line: we should not be asked to pay more to enforce a policy that undermines student safety.

Local school boards are best equipped to set cell phone policies that reflect the needs and realities of their communities. Many districts already have restrictions in place. A statewide mandate removes flexibility without addressing the root causes of school violence.

For reasons of student safety, lack of meaningful violence prevention, and the absence of funding, I whole-heartedly urge the committee to oppose HB 2421 as written.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Danielle Martinez
Parent and concerned citizen
Roeland Park, KS 66205

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Kathleen R. Martinez

TITLE: Kansas constituent and parent

EMAIL ADDRESS: katieraff@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill HB 2421

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: [choose one]

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Testimony

DATE OF HEARING: February 6, 2026

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am reaching you in regards to bill number HB 2421 to express my opposition to the bill as it is drafted today. While it is clear that restrictions and guidelines are needed in school, a bell-to-bell ban on all personal electronic devices (phones, smartwatches, earbuds) for all students (grades K-12); no access to phones from the start of the day to the end of the day is far too restrictive for students and parents alike. Additionally, the solutions recommended in the bill are costly and create logistical issues.

I appreciate your time today and consideration to oppose bill number HB 2421

Kathleen R. Martinez

Kansas constituent and parent

Overland Park, KS



Kansas PTA
715 SW 10th Street, Topeka KS 66612
www.kansas-pta-legislative.org

Vikkie Mullins, President
(submitted by Mary Sinclair, PhD, Advocacy Team)

Kansas PTA

kansaspta@gmail.com (mfoxsinclair@gmail.com)

HB 2421. Cell Phone Use in School Districts

Opponent. This is a policy and practice issue for local control.

Written Only Testimony. House Education Committee

Hearing. Friday, January 16, 1:30 pm, Room 218-N

Michelle Sims, Committee Assistant
785-296-7388, h.Education@house.ks.gov, Michelle.sims@house.ks.gov
Room 286-N, State Capitol Building

Honorable Chair Estes and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Kansas PTA, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to HB 2421 regarding the use of cell phones in schools districts. Kansas PTA supports the work of districts to engage students in learning and to minimize distractions. Use of personal electronic communication devices, however, is **an issue for locally elected school boards** and district leadership (KS PTA Legislative Priority 1). Many Kansas school districts already have policies or guidelines in place, intentionally crafted with the input of local stakeholders. This proposed state mandate cancels the voices of these parents, teachers, administrators, and students across the state.

Further, this bill will create problems. For example:

- **Unnecessary Logistical Challenges.** Many local schools currently require students to store their phones. These educators have implemented procedures that are effective, enforceable, and affordable. The proposed storage mandates could create logistic challenges that cost districts even more money and/or are less effective.
- **Unfunded Mandate.** This bill creates an unfunded mandate and liability exposure, adding additional budget pressures that take away from teacher pay.
- **Communication Restrictions.** While attention to the use of effective platforms for timely and efficient one-way communication is appreciated, the bill is not clear on how a student would communicate with a teacher, coach or activity director regarding an issue

that warrants student privacy. Student safety from predatory or inappropriate contact is important. This bill does not solve those concerns.

- **Chronic Absenteeism.** Secondary schools could see a spike in chronic absenteeism and declining academic performance due to disproportionate disciplinary actions mandated by state law in the name of enforcing cell phone policy violations. This bill siphons valuable administrative time from supporting actual evidence-based practices to increase student engagement.
- **Unnecessary Staff Burdens.** The screen time reporting requirements are likely to over-estimate actual active student use given idle time and to conflict with valuable instructional and coaching time from teachers and administrators, respectively. At best, this bill interferes with more integrated approaches to manage developmentally appropriate levels of screen time during the school day, best guided by building principals and district administrators with the instructional expertise.

Our public schools are the heart of Kansas communities, serving 90% of school age youth. Our teachers and administrators are committed to preparing all kids to thrive in work and in life. Creating opportunities for every child to engage and be successful serves to strengthen the viability of a thriving Kansas future.

Thank you for your consideration. I urge committee members, on behalf of the Kansas PTA, to vote no on HB 2421 regarding the use of cell phones in school districts. Respect the authority and knowledge that Kansas voters place in their locally elected school board members.

Vikki Mullins, Kansas PTA President
KansasPTA@gmail.com
@KsPTALeg

Cc: Angie Gunion, VP of Advocacy
Devin Wilson, Legislative Liaison
Mary Sinclair, PhD, Advocacy Team

THE PTA POSITION

Kansas PTA is a nonpartisan association that promotes the welfare of children and youth. The PTA does not endorse any candidate or political party. Rather, we advocate for policies and legislation that affect Kansas youth in alignment with our legislative platform and priorities. PTA mission and purpose have remained the same since our inception over 100 years ago, focused on facilitating every child's potential and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education

NAME: Adrienne Newlin

TITLE: Kansas citizen, parent

EMAIL ADDRESS: adrienne.newlin@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill HB2421

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: OPPONENT

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: written only testimony

DATE OF HEARING: January 16, 2026

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to you all with my OPPOSITION to HB 2421.

This bill does not belong in the state legislature. Our school districts are run by local school boards. These board members are voted in to represent the will and desire of constituents and make decisions in collaboration with parents, teachers and students in the district.

If the legislature is so concerned with public schools, how about fully funding Special Education? Or enacting stricter gun legislation, support for mental health initiatives and so on. While most parents

will agree that screen time is a concern, we would also agree that we do not need state legislators deciding what is best for our local schools.

Our district already adopted a new cell phone policy and this policy has worked for years now. A statewide mandate does nothing but harm our local schools, students and teachers. It costs (already underfunded) districts more money and puts a larger burden on the day to day activities of teachers and administrators.

Please vote NO on HB 2421.

Adrienne Newlin

KS resident, parent

Overland Park

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Terese Quenette

TITLE: citizen, parent, educator

EMAIL ADDRESS: tquenette@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill HB 2421

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: OPPONENT

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: WRITTEN ONLY

DATE OF HEARING: February 6, 2026

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

HB 2421 will be an expensive, one-size-fits-all restriction that is inappropriate for students in an era where communication during school safety incidents is of utmost concern. As a public school teacher and as a parent, I am very confused why anyone would think the limitations of this bill are appropriate for 2026 Kansas.

EXPENSES: With the history of KS legislatures refusing to fully fund our schools and special education program, this bill would require districts to spread their dollars even thinner. This bill allocates no budget to schools yet requires measures that would be costly.

ONE SIZE FITS ALL: This bill would remove power from local boards of education. For a state that historically treasures local decisions, this bill steers away from that.

SCHOOL SAFETY: This bill would restrict students from accessing phones that are incredibly important during school safety and school shooting scenarios. As the current Kansas legislature body continues to do little to address common sense gun measures, students should expect more and more safety concerns within the school building. Since we're not doing anything to decrease access to guns, could we at least allow them to call their families next time their school is in lock down?

Please oppose HB 2421 and reserve your energy for fully funding public education, special education, and consider common sense gun laws. These things will help ALL Kansans and be a better use of Topeka's time.

Thanks,

Terese Quenette

Lenexa, KS

Testimony to the House Education Committee

February 6, 2026

Bill HB 2421 Opponent

Meaghan Schaible

Parent, SMSD 512 1st and 6th graders

meaghan54@gmail.com

Chair & Members of the Committee,

I'm writing to voice my opposition to bill HB 2421.

Under the current SMSD cell phone policy there is no impediment to our children's learning. This bill differs from SMSD's current cell phone policy which is differentiated by grade level. Policies should be determined by locally elected school boards and administrators, not state legislators. This ensures local stakeholders—parents, teachers, and students—have a voice in shaping policies that work for their district and allows for policy changes as needs arise.

The bill creates logistical challenges such as securely collecting, storing, and distributing phones each day and the potential costs this could create for school districts. These bills create an unfunded mandate at a time when general education funds are already being depleted by the shortfall in special education funding.

Please vote no on HB 2421.

Meaghan Schaible

Merriam, KS



SHAWNEE MISSION SCHOOL DISTRICT

Opponent Written Testimony on House Bill 2421
House Education Committee.

January 22, 2026

Chairperson Estes and Members of the Committee,

As superintendent of the Shawnee Mission School District (SMSD), I am writing to submit testimony in opposition to House Bill 2421. Our opposition stems from the need to maintain local control over aspects of public education that fall within the purview of local elected boards of education; the conflict between this proposed law and existing SMSD Board policy; a significant difference in our understanding of what constitutes “instructional time;” and our concern about the implications of this proposed law being an unfunded mandate which would impose significant costs in terms of time and financial resources on school districts.

The Shawnee Mission School District Board of Education has passed policy and developed clear guidelines for personal device use in classrooms. The process for developing policy and guidelines came from our community-developed strategic plan, and included broad community input. This input included parents, teachers, administrators, students and community members, and devoted significant time to wrestling with the inevitable unintended consequences that would come from enacting any sweeping policy. Our Board of Education weighed the benefits and consequences of the decisions they made, and came up with a policy that works for our community. As such, we strongly believe that our policy and guidelines represent the will of our community when it comes to cell phone use in our schools.

The proposed law conflicts with existing SMSD policy in a number of important ways, in a manner which would thwart the will of this community, as expressed through the strategic planning process. Recognizing that students of different ages have different needs and levels of responsibility, our policy for electronic devices treats elementary, middle and high school students differently, allowing for a gradual increase in access and accountability, as students mature.

Our community strongly believes that elementary students do not need phones while they are in school, and our policy supports this. For secondary students, particularly ones who have responsibility for the safety and well-being of younger students, there are times during a school day when parents might want them to have access to their phone, and our policy allows this at times that do not interfere with instructional time. This is an adaptation that came from the policy adoption process and was important to our community, and an example of why respecting local control is so important.

It is important to note that our policy has an understanding of “instructional time” which differs from the definition found in Senate Bill 302, and reflects our community’s belief that there are times during the day when, for our secondary students, having access to a phone does not interfere with the time dedicated to instruction. This represents a hard-fought compromise where



SHAWNEE MISSION SCHOOL DISTRICT

no one got everything they wanted, but in the end, the district came out with a policy that works for this community.

Additionally, this bill proposes reports for the average amount of time students spend on electronic devices with a screen. Much like our discussion related to personal electronic device use, using broad community input from our parents and educators, our district is developing a Technology Framework to address age-appropriate screen time while students are at school. It also guides how to take steps to limit that use in the classroom, as is appropriate for each grade level. We are taking steps to implement these practices fully this spring. These changes will be implemented through the work of our administration and school board and is another instance where local control best allows us to honor the will and needs of our community.

Finally, this bill contains unacknowledged costs for school districts; both the financial costs of whatever system is used to securely store electronic communication devices "...away from the student's person in an inaccessible location during instructional time..." as well as, perhaps more importantly, the costs in both time and the human resources necessary to administer such a system, which would interfere with those resources being used to support instruction. The district will always stand in opposition to mandates which place additional responsibilities on the district, without the resources necessary to meet those responsibilities.

Other districts in our area have invested significant time and resources in developing their own policies with regard to electronic devices, just as we have in Shawnee Mission. We do not see the need for the legislature to take any action which would supersede these policies, which represent the will of the communities in which they were developed. However, if the legislature feels the need to act, our district would be in support of legislation that required each district in the state to develop their own policy with regard to student access to electronic devices. This would maintain decision-making power at the local level where it belongs, while ensuring that all students would be learning in environments governed by policies that limit access to electronic devices during instructional time.

I appreciate your consideration, and would be glad to respond to any questions that you might have.

Sincerely,

Dr. Michael Schumacher
Superintendent

Testimony to the House Education Committee
February 6, 2026
Bill HB 2421- Opponent

Leslee Troutman
Parent and Overland Park, Kansas Resident
Leslee4384@gmail.com

Chair & Members of the Committee,

I am writing as a parent to respectfully voice my opposition to House Bill 2421, which proposes a statewide ban on student cell phones during the school day.

As a parent of 3 children in school, I strongly believe that decisions like this are best made at the local level. I agree with the Shawnee Mission School District and the Kansas PTA that locally elected school boards, working closely with educators and families, are in the best position to create and enforce policies that reflect the needs of their students and communities. Many districts across Kansas have already implemented cell phone restrictions, and those policies are working. Local control allows districts to listen, learn and adjust as needed, a flexibility that would be lost with a statewide mandate.

At the high school level especially, I believe students should be taught responsibility rather than governed by a blanket rule. In our district, students are already required to have their phones powered off and stored away during instructional time. This approach sets clear expectations while also helping students to learn self-discipline and accountability, skills they will need as adults. A statewide law removes this opportunity for students to practice responsibility in an appropriate, supervised environment.

I am also concerned that this bill represents an unnecessary state overreach into decisions that have historically been handled effectively by local school boards. Kansas communities value local input and local governance, and this legislation moves us away from that ability.

As a parent, I want policies that support learning while respecting local decisions-making and the professional judgement of educators and school leaders. For these reasons, I ask the committee to oppose HB 2421.

Please vote no on House Bill 2421.

Respectfully,
Leslee Troutman
Parent
Overland Park, Kansas

Testimony to the House Education Committee

February 6, 2026

Bill HB 2421 Opponent

Brianna Vaughn, parent of SMSD students

9209 Overland Park, KS 66207

Chair & Members of the Committee,

I'm writing to voice my opposition to bill HB 2421.

While I do understand the need for more regulation on cell phones in school, I oppose this bill due to the fact there is no funding for schools to implement the required materials to lock up the cell phones (ex. Phone lockers, lockable phone pouches).

I also don't agree with a bell-to-bell policy with no access at all to my child, or them to me throughout the entire day. Communication to administrators and teachers via email can be a very slow response and there are times it is helpful, and I'm sure easier for admins, for my child or I to send a message during passing period, with her phone kept in her locker during instructional times and the rest of the day.

Please vote no on bill HB 2421.

I do feel this is something that can and should be regulated more at a local level by local elected school board officials, and the state can focus more on fully funding special education rather than requiring more money taken out of public school budgets!

Brianna Vaughn
Parent of SMSD students
Overland Park



Opposition Written Testimony – HB2421
House Committee on Education
Representative Susan Estes, Chair

February 5, 2026
Susan Willis, Government Liaison
USD 259 - Wichita Public Schools

Chair Estes and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide opposition testimony on House Bill 2421.

Wichita Public Schools recognizes and shares the legislature's interest in ensuring that instructional time is focused, effective and free from unnecessary distractions. Creating learning environments where students are engaged with their teachers and peers is a goal that is important to educators, families and students across Kansas.

This is why Wichita had already set forth policy restricting use of personal electronic devices during classroom time, with the exception of teacher-approved use for instructional purposes in secondary schools. This policy was vetted by our Board of Education, developed with community input, and currently serves our school community well. And, we were able to implement the policy with no financial cost and minimal investment of time and human capital. It demonstrates how thoughtful, district-specific policies can effectively support instructional goals while addressing the unique needs of students, staff and families.

Wichita submitted neutral testimony on the companion bill in the Senate, SB 302. Both bills are clearly directed at limiting disruptions during the entire school day. As the district considers the ramifications of this expansion of the definition of "instructional time," there are a few areas where additional clarity could help ensure the bill is applied consistently and in a manner that supports both instructional goals and local operational practices.

In most of our high school settings, some students may be permitted to leave school premises during lunch pursuant to board-approved policies. We seek an amendment to the "instructional time" definition to not include any time associated with students off premises for short-term periods, including lunch periods or brief, approved appointments. This ensures students can safely communicate with families or guardians during approved, off-campus periods without undermining the bill's goal of distraction-free instructional time.

This bill will involve some type of storage solution (new or repurposed equipment) for upwards of 26,000 secondary students who could have a personal electronic device, as well as the time and human capital investment to implement fully and enforce. We note nothing in the bill addressing this for districts. Also, we have some concerns with administering the medical and IEP exceptions, particularly in those times outside the classroom, without violating FERPA.

We specifically oppose HB2421's requirement of a report on the average amount of time that students grade one through four spend on an electronic device. This mandate would impose a new, statewide collection burden on districts without clear evidence that such reporting will improve educational

outcomes or student well-being. Establishing a valid and reliable method for measuring screen time across diverse classroom and instructional experiences is a challenge, and multiple methods of gathering data render cross-district comparisons of limited value. Requiring standardized reporting would divert district resources, including staff time and technology systems, away from direct student support and instructional priorities.

If the report requirement is eliminated, our other comments are offered neutrally and with the goal of supporting clear, workable implementation should the bill advance.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Opposition, Written Only Testimony on House Bill 2421
House Education Committee,
January 20, 2026
Dr. Brent Yeager, Superintendent, Olathe Public Schools

Chair Estes and Members of the Committee:

Olathe Public Schools is opposed to House Bill 2421. Our community and elected Board are committed to addressing the broad range of issues that cellphones and social media have contributed to changing the nature of our society in general and our schools in particular. House Bill 2421 mandates the strongest instrument to address these issues. We support regulation of phones in schools. A fully funded school finance formula, including the \$44 million annually we divert from the budget to fill the special education shortfall, and management of cellphone behavior are both required.

We do not support the proposed methods of eliminating the negative impact of cellphones in all schools. One-size fits every school district will not address the issue. The current bill includes exceptions, and more exceptions will certainly be sought, and the bill includes the exemption for non-public schools receiving public funds. Section 3 (2) also includes new cumbersome and extensive recording and reporting on all screentime for students from grades one through four. House Bill 2421 is not a comprehensive solution, and it is not a solution built on our community and parental engagement. As ours is in Olathe.

We support House Bill 2421 as a framework and guide for all schools to set high and clear standards, goals, and outcomes. We support the ability of each elected school board, and non-public school governing body, to determine, within state standards, measures to mitigate the impact of cellphones and the challenges they bring to the classroom.

The Olathe Public Schools Board of Education has policies and guidance that already address the content of this bill; we prioritize local control. Our Board of Education voted on policies over a year ago that met the needs our greater community has asked for regarding cell phone usage in the classroom. Historically issues the Legislature addresses with a broad ban may not reflect the varied needs of each local school district and communities they serve. Our focus remains on the importance of serving our community's expectations with the final decisions rooted in the elected board's decisions locally.

The focus and commitment of our Board to our community is on setting and fulfilling high expectations for all our students and addressing cellphone use is a priority. Our Board focuses valuable resources on ensuring students have the opportunity to succeed and minimization of cellphone interference is critical. Our robust school improvement system holds schools accountable for academic achievement and progress, and we are accountable for addressing cellphones with the support and engagement of our community, not the mandate in House Bill 2421.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brent Yeager", is positioned above the typed name.

Dr. Brent Yeager, Superintendent
Olathe Public Schools
byeagerec@olatheschools.org