



House Education Committee

Neutral to HB 2421

February 6, 2026

Dear Chair Estes and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of thousands of AFP activists across the state.

While we do appreciate the intent behind HB 2421 while strongly urging an important amendment: the bill should not apply to accredited private schools. Frankly, we believe the ideal is for school boards and individual institutions to make the decisions that best fit their schools and families.

However, understanding that the state feels compelled to act, I am including two solutions which would be a significant and necessary improvement.

Although we understand HB 2421 addresses a real concern, its current scope raises significant policy implications that merit careful consideration. The question is not whether cell-phone limits are wise; it is whether the state should begin regulating at this level of detail in private education. Once opened, this door will be hard to close.

Including accredited private schools sets a concerning precedent for state regulation. Current state requirements for private, accredited schools are broad—covering areas such as safety, transportation, curriculum sufficiency, use of licensed teachers, and the number of school days. These regulations are either foundational, voluntary, or flexible, and none delve into granular operational mandates such as classroom cell-phone rules. Extending state authority into such day-to-day management effectively lowers the regulatory threshold for future involvement.

Moreover, the legislation does not address how the state would enforce or monitor compliance among private schools. Requiring private institutions to certify adherence to a granular classroom rule moves far beyond existing precedent and creates a new

bureaucratic expectation with unclear implementation. This likely also comes with rising costs to the state.

Expanding HB 2421 to private schools is simply not necessary. While at least 26 states restrict student cell-phone use, Vermont is the only state that applies such mandates to private schools. Additionally, many private, accredited schools already enforce their own appropriate cell-phone policies. If HB 2421 applies only to public schools, the bill would still pass easily and achieve its core purpose without setting problematic precedents.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge you to amend HB 2421 to avoid unintended policy consequences.

****Recommended Policy Solutions****

✓ Solution 1: Remove all references to non-public, accredited schools.

This preserves the bill's intent while protecting the regulatory autonomy of private education.

✓ Solution 2: Allow non-public, accredited schools to *opt in* voluntarily.

The state can strongly recommend adoption of cell-phone policies without mandating them.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these concerns. We appreciate your commitment to improving educational environments while safeguarding institutional independence and individualized decision making. I welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations further.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Patton

Regional Director

Americans for Prosperity