

Ngoc Vuong's Written Copy of Oral Testimony (Proponent) for SB 302

Dear Members of the Kansas Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Ngoc Vuong. I am a school board member for Wichita Public Schools. I am also a PhD candidate (ABD) in community psychology at Wichita State University, where I am leading a quasi-experimental study on the academic effects of personal electronic device (PED) policies across middle schools and high schools in Kansas. **I am speaking in my personal capacity as a proponent of Kansas Senate Bill 302.**

While [multiple factors](#) are responsible for causing and exacerbating the ongoing youth [mental health](#), [literacy](#), and [numeracy](#) crises, the evidence increasingly points to the advent and proliferation of a **screen-based childhood**; the immense power and influence of **Big Tech companies** over our society, culture, and education system; and the **unhealthy relationships** many **children and adolescents have with smartphones and social media** as central drivers of these problematic outcomes.

I caution that the role of digital technology in shaping learning, cognitive functioning and development, physical and mental health, and well-being is nuanced, context-specific, and complex. We must be careful not to (over)pathologize digital behaviors. At the same time, **the literature is very clear on the risks associated with excessive and dysregulated smartphone and social media use**, especially for children and adolescents. High-quality systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and experimental studies **consistently link problematic technology use to diminished academic performance** (see [Kuş, 2025](#); [Paterna et al., 2024](#); and [Zhou et al., 2024](#)); **impaired attention/focus and executive functioning** (see [Anbumalar & Binu Sahayam, 2024](#); [Ioannidis et al., 2019](#); and [León Méndez et al., 2024](#)), and **disrupted sleep** (see [Ahmed et al., 2024](#); [Alonzo et al., 2021](#); and [Hartstein et al., 2024](#)) that **undermines physical and mental health**. And despite ongoing debate, the cumulative evidence from three umbrella reviews indicates that youth social media use imposes measurable, nontrivial **risks to their mental health and well-being** (see [Sala et al., 2024](#); [Sanders et al., 2024](#); and [Valkenburg et al., 2022](#)).

While I recognize and respect the local control argument, as a researcher and local school board member, I have come to the conclusion that, given the universality of problematic smartphone and social media use and its disproportionate impact on K-12 students, **state-level action is necessary to mitigate its harms and promote more constructive, focused, and engaging learning environments**. Considering the commodification of our time and attention through smartphones and social media, and the very intentional, exploitative design by Big Tech companies to maximize consumption and extract personal information, it is my opinion that **local policies alone are insufficient**. Growing evidence, particularly from rigorous studies, demonstrates the **positive benefits of bell-to-bell personal electronic device policies** (see [Duckworth et al., 2025](#) and [Figlio & Özek, 2025](#)), especially when clearly communicated, consistently and equitably enforced, and uniformly implemented. Reflecting on my own experiences and observations, I will also add the following:

- For a bell-to-bell personal electronic device policy to be effective, it is vital that there is **physical separation (inaccessibility)** between students and their devices.
- School districts should have the latitude and flexibility in deciding on their storage options and processes in a way that **reduces the strain and workload on staff**, is

financially sustainable, and accounts for open lunches/when students need to be off school premises.

- We must ensure this bill has adequate language which ensures protections for students with IEPs, 504 plans, or other documented medical needs.
- While a statewide, all-day restriction on the **use and possession** of personal electronic devices among K-12 students is needed, **it is not enough.**
 - o **How much time are students across all grade levels spending on screens (specifically, 1:1 school-issued devices),** what are they spending their screentime on, and how does this relate to changes in their behaviors and academic performance?
 - o What are families, schools and school districts, health care and public health systems, and local and state governments doing to promote digital citizenship, digital well-being, and digital disconnection? And **how can we work together to promote healthier digital habits and behaviors in our communities, especially among our youth?** What could a youth-led effort in this regard look like?
 - o In the context of the education-industrial complex, **to what extent are the endless plethora of EdTech products and services actually effective** in helping provide high-quality curriculum and instruction, promoting critical thinking and grit, and improving student outcomes?

Lastly, regarding my ongoing research on the academic effects of personal electronic device policies in Kansas, I am still in the process of data collection, cleaning, and integration. My goal is that by the end of Spring 2026, **I will have concrete findings that speak directly to the effects of bell-to-bell personal electronic device policies (including storage requirements) on standardized test scores, attendance and chronic absenteeism, and graduation rates in Kansas.** I will continue to follow the research closely and share insights as they become available. Moreover, I am ready to change my own perspectives depending on the research. As it stands, however, based on Fall 2025 data:

- Most school districts do not have a standalone board policy on personal electronic devices ($n = 263$, 92%); instead, these policies are generally enacted as part of the student handbooks.
- 91 school districts (32%) have a bell-to-bell personal electronic device policy across all grade levels, representing 11% of all public-school students in Kansas.

Sincerely,

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