

Dear Chair Erickson and members of the committee,

Hello my name is Amy Warren and I have 3 children currently attending Wichita Public Schools. I am a co-chair of the Ks Coalition for Distraction Free Schools, and was sworn in Monday night to serve on the board of education for Wichita Public Schools (though I am not speaking as an official representative of them today.)

Thank you for presenting Bill 302 for consideration. I would like to start by describing how we got to the point where legislation is necessary. First, we were caught off guard. With optimism we welcomed smartphones, but failed to see they were really like an invasive weed, incompatible with what we are growing in our schools. During the school day phones divert valuable resources from that which is meant to thrive- attention, connection, critical thinking, independence, etc. We're here because these devices are not neutral. The harm to learning isn't a bug in the system or some individual failing. These were never designed for our learning environments.

As we became aware of the extent of the harms from a phone-based childhood we assumed that consequences for personal devices would accrue only to the individual student who carried the phone. So even though having a phone in school had a negative effect on that student, others could make a different choice and fare better. So we left it up to individual students, parents and educators to manage.

However, we can't address our collective problem with individual solutions. [Evidence](#) shows that physical proximity to a device reduces cognitive capacity. Device misuse doesn't just negatively affect the student holding it, but distracts and draws attention from surrounding peers. Teenagers receive an average of [237 notifications per day](#), with more than 25% of those occurring during school hours. That's nearly 60 notifications during school. Attention, in the educational setting, is like a community well that can be poisoned for all by only one person's device.

We now know harms aren't just to attention, but also to mental health, bullying, critical thinking skills. So we introduced strongly-worded guidelines and porous policies, hoping that schools and local districts would address our collective action problem with their own individually tailored solutions, meaning now it's classrooms, schools and local districts that are deciding as opposed to individual students.

Let me provide you with an update on this version of the solution, having been in schools, having talked with teachers, staff and principals and many others: our class-by-class, school-by-school approach may appear to be successful for some, but it is failing for FAR more. We are dealing with an invasive plant that has damaged our main crop. Year after year we watch as phone-disrupted education becomes more normalized, accepting that though our students are struggling, it's just the way it has to be. We've settled- willing to allow widespread harms and disruptions to students and staff while we wait and wait for others to get on board. We have forgotten the learning experiences that got us- the adults in the room-

where we are today; forgotten that school days have more to offer than what we're giving this younger generation.

I understand why we have settled on these inequitable solutions. As a freedom-loving people we often prefer to limit legislation, and leave it as a last resort- only to be used when either all other measures have failed, or when the immediate consequences are clear. Other measures have failed. Consequences are clear. Please pass Bill 302.