

## **Testimony to the Senate Education Committee – Support for SB 302**

January 14, 2026

Kate Beebe, Preschool teacher and parent of 11 year old and 15 year old in Shawnee Mission School District  
[katehuff@yahoo.com](mailto:katehuff@yahoo.com)

Chair & Members of the Committee,

I'm writing to voice my support to bill SB 302.

After reading the book *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haight, I am convinced that cell phones are a major distraction to children of all ages in schools. Adults and teachers need to show them that it is possible, and very healthy, to put these devices away during the school day to allow their brains to grow in attention, focus, and concentration. Some may say it is too costly to implement this, but I think it is absolutely worth the effort and investment for the sake of our kids' attention spans and mental health.

Please vote yes on SB 302.

Thank you,

Kate Beebe

Prairie Village, KS

To whom it may concern,

My name is Allison Brimblecom. My husband Billy and I live in Lenexa and our 2 kids attend Mill Creek Elementary and Trailridge Middle School in the Shawnee Mission School District.

I was a public elementary school teacher for 10 years in KS and TN and I am passionate about supporting public education.

The science and research is very clear that phone-free schools are beneficial for students' learning, test scores, social relationships and mental health. Anyone in favor of keeping phones as a part of the school day - even just in hallways and at lunch - would be hard-pressed to show evidence or science that shows any benefit - other than, perhaps, convenience for adults.

It's time for a counter-cultural course correction. Smartphones have evolved and so should our policies. Kids on phones creates a huge profit for many stakeholders. Do we want big tech to lead our culture - a culture where it's now normal for young students to be on phones several hours a day? Or can public schools lead the way and set the standard?

It's not enough to ask students to keep phones in their backpacks. The online world that we have access to on our phones is by design - highly addictive. It's not a matter of students with developing brains needing more self-control. When students' phones are accessible - we're creating an environment that leads to them sneaking their phones, and putting the responsibility of policing phones on teachers.

Every day parents are making hard choices about limits they should have on technology in their own homes. I am not interested in telling other parents what is best for their families outside of school. But I believe a bell to bell policy where phones are locked up in Yonder pouches or in dedicated phone lockers is truly a GIFT we can give our kids. A gift not grounded in fear but grounded in love and care.

In my community, our school district has made some changes with technology policies but they are not enough. I hope the state of Kansas will be swift to to pass and implement this bill and join the other states and school districts leading the way in this space. Our leadership will give other school districts and states the U.S. the courage to do the same.

Sincerely,

Allison Brimblecom  
Lenexa, KS

Hello!

I am writing to express my strong support for the bill to ban cell phones in schools.

As a teacher, I see firsthand that phones are a significant distraction to student learning. Many students are genuinely incapable of putting their phones down, and some are even willing to accept disciplinary consequences rather than surrender their device for the remainder of class. When a phone becomes the focus, very little meaningful learning takes place.

While some argue that cell phone use is merely a classroom management issue, it is unrealistic to expect teachers to compete with devices that are intentionally designed to capture and hold students' attention. My role as a teacher is not to entertain students into disengaging from their phones, but to teach them valuable academic and life skills, one of which is learning that there is a vast and meaningful world beyond their screens.

I have seen significant improvements in student focus and engagement since my district implemented a new phone policy. However, enforcement is still largely left to individual teachers, turning the classroom into a constant "gotcha" game where students are further distracted by hiding their phones rather than fully participating in learning.

A clear, consistent, statewide policy would remove this burden from teachers and districts and allow us to focus on what truly matters: educating students.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Nikki Cochran

Kayla Conely  
Wichita, KS  
January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Kansas Senators  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10th Ave  
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Senator(s):

I am writing to express my strong support for Kansas Senate Bill 302, establishing phone-free school environments in Kansas public schools.

I am a public school educator and have witnessed firsthand how smartphones have rapidly become a central distraction in my students' academic and social lives. Research consistently shows that constant digital interruptions impair too much for us to continue letting cell phones into schools. The amount of instructional minutes lost each day to cell-related disruptions, notifications, and off-task use is astounding and this is not to mention the relational damage that comes from trying to separate the students from the device (many of them show addict-like tendencies).

SB 302 will allow schools to reclaim classroom time for teaching and learning!

I want to stress that this bill would also help support adolescent mental health. The rise in anxiety, depressive symptoms, and social comparison among teens has tracked closely with the shift to constant digital connection.

Kansas students deserve school environments that support access to high-level rigor and learning, emotional well-being, and genuine human connection. Passing SB 302 will move Kansas toward evidence-aligned policy that reflects the realities teachers and families are facing daily.

Please support Senate Bill 302.

Thank you for your time,

Kayla Conely  
Public School Teacher  
Parent  
Kansan

**Proponent Testimony for SB 302  
for the Senate Committee on Education  
Thursday, January 15, 2026  
Tim DeWeese  
Director, Johnson County Mental Health Center**

Chairperson Erickson and members of the committee, my name is Tim DeWeese, and I serve as the Director of Johnson County Mental Health Center. I appreciate the opportunity to provide **proponent** testimony today in support of SB 302.

Johnson County Mental Health Center began operating in 1962, initially providing outpatient services with four employees in one location. Today, we have over 500 employees in six locations throughout Johnson County delivering community-based mental health and substance use treatment services to tens-of-thousands of residents annually. We are a department of Johnson County Government, licensed by the State of Kansas as a Community Mental Health Center (CMHC), accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) International and certified as a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) by the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS).

From a mental health perspective, constant access to personal electronic devices during the school day contributes to distraction, social pressure and emotional dysregulation. Smartphones and similar devices are designed to capture and hold attention, but they often pull students away from learning and in-person interaction, keeping their attention in the wrong place.

When students are not continually managing notifications and social pressures during classroom time, they are better able to focus, participate and build the interpersonal skills that support long-term mental health. The abilities to sustain attention, regulate emotions and build relationships are foundational to both academic success and lifelong well-being.

SB 302 also takes an important step by limiting social media communication between school staff and students. Clear, professional boundaries are essential to maintaining safe and supportive learning environments, and communication should occur through structured, transparent and school-approved channels.

Because the provisions in this bill will support student focus, emotional well-being and healthy social development, Johnson County Mental Health Center supports SB 302 and asks the members of the committee to recommend its passage.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Tim DeWeese, LMSW  
Director, Johnson County Mental Health Center

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## Proponent Testimony of SB 302

For the Senate Education Committee

January 15, 2026

Susan Dunaway, LCPC

Chief Neuroscience Officer - Brain Health & Learning

Kids Digital Health Hub | Screen Guardians

Chair Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of Senate Bill 302 on behalf of the Kids Digital Health Hub and Screen Guardians.

I'm old enough to remember sitting in restaurants as a child and breathing in the smoke of those around me. Back then, people thought smoking only hurt the smoker. I remember the grumbles when the laws were changed! The changes came in stages. The first was creating "smoking" and "non-smoking" sections of restaurants; even as a child that seemed like nonsense. After all, the smoke didn't care what part of the restaurant it went to. Eventually, the adults caught up to what every child knew and the smokers went outside.

The arguments on banning smoking indoors led to heated debates. There were the usual individual freedoms versus good-of-society debate and Big Tobacco brought their economic impact arguments. In the end, though, it was decided the health of children and the benefit to society was more important than the inconvenience to an individual or the profits of a company.

Eventually everyone understood the science behind secondhand smoke. And now we look back and wonder how they ever blew so much smoke around so many innocent lungs.

The laws banned it. The science backed it. Behaviors changed to follow the law. Society changed its views on the behavior.

The same is true of personal devices in schools. But the impact on children is not on their lungs. It's on their brains. I started speaking out over a decade ago on how screens and brains don't mesh well, especially the younger the brain is. I can't think of one part of the

brain untouched: it impacts the prefrontal cortex (executive functions), the limbic system (feelings and memory), the frontal and occipital lobes (reading, speaking, comprehension). And it's clear, more time on screens equals more problems.

So far, many personal device bans in school are akin to early smoking bans. We're in the "Do you want to sit in the Smoking or the Non-Smoking Section?" phase. These bans seldom work.

When personal devices are accessible during the school day, even if only during breaks and between classes students live in a state of Continuous Partial Attention. When students know they can access their device every 45 minutes they must try to concentrate on their teacher while simultaneously wondering what they might be missing out on. Or, as is often the case, concentrate on the teacher while stressing about what they just saw on their phones during the passing period. Or even worse, knowing there is some drama that they feel they must resolve as soon as possible but can't because they had to put their phone away for class. It's as if they have one foot in the classroom and one in the digital world. It fractures learning, attention and memory while increasing stress.

When these partial bans are in place we ask them to carry a heavy load. "Just don't think about that thing in your pocket that you can get to as soon as the bell rings." That's a big ask. As an adult, can you do it? If you bring your phone into a meeting and it buzzes but you know you are not supposed to look at it, can you ignore it? Doesn't it divert your attention even if just for a moment? And if you do manage to ignore it there is a price your brain pays for that interruption. You likely miss what was said. It will impact your memory. There is a little bit of increased stress. Or maybe you're in session and feeling bored or frustrated so you pull out your phone to distract yourself or send a message, maybe you even stay on longer than intended. My point is, as adults we do not manage this technology as well as we wish we did. How can we ask our children to do more?

This is not a case of "they have to learn how to manage it." They can't. Big Tech, like the Big Tobacco of my childhood, has made sure it comes out on the winning end. The brains of our children are bombarded in ways that fracture their attention and their emotions, it is increasing their stress and anxiety. I didn't even touch on what it's doing to them socially. It's up to the adults to make school into a space where they can learn and relate to one another in real life. It's time for us to decide to follow in the footsteps of the smoking bans and realize that the health of our children and the benefit to society is more important than the inconvenience to an individual or the profits of a company.

Please give educators and administrators something to fall back on. Give kids the chance to learn in a distraction-free environment. And give society a chance to catch up. Because

our children have really big problems to solve. And they won't be able to do it if they aren't given the chance to learn.

Thank you.

Susan Dunaway, LCPC, Neurotherapist

Chief Neuroscience Officer - Brain Health & Learning

Kids Digital Health Hub | Screen Guardians



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**Claudia Fury-Aguirre**

Manager of Kansas Policy and Outreach, Aligned  
**Proponent for SB 302 (Written-Only Testimony)**  
Bell-to-Bell Cell Phone Policy  
Senate Education Committee  
January 15, 2026

**Senator Erickson and Members of the committee,**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 302. Aligned is a nonprofit, business-led coalition working to strengthen education and workforce systems across Kansas and Missouri so that all students graduate prepared for postsecondary education, training, and meaningful careers. **We support SB 302 because it advances student learning, protects instructional time, and promotes healthy school environments for all students.**

From employers' perspectives across Kansas, one message is consistent: students need strong academic foundations, focus, and the ability to engage meaningfully with others. Increasingly, districts, educators, and families are raising concerns that constant access to personal electronic communication devices during the school day undermines those goals. SB 302 responds to those concerns with a balanced, evidence-informed approach.

Research consistently shows that unrestricted access to personal devices during instructional time negatively affects student attention, learning outcomes, and classroom engagement. Research shows that reducing phone use during class improves student focus and academic performance, particularly for younger students and students who already face learning barriers. Importantly, these benefits are often greatest for students from lower-income backgrounds, who are more likely to experience learning disruptions and fewer structured opportunities to disengage from screens outside of school.

SB 302 reinforces the importance of instructional time by setting a clear expectation that personal electronic communication devices should not be used during the school day, while still allowing districts flexibility in implementation. The bill appropriately includes exceptions for students with individualized education programs, 504 plans, or documented medical needs, ensuring that accessibility and student health remain in consideration.

Aligned also supports the bill's provisions related to professional digital boundaries between school employees and students. Clear guidelines limiting private or direct social media communication for official school purposes protect students, educators, and districts alike.

These safeguards reflect best practices in student safety and professional ethics while still allowing schools to communicate publicly and transparently about school activities and events.

Critically, SB 302 does not impose a one-size-fits-all enforcement model. Local boards retain authority to adopt policies that reflect their community context, school culture, and operational realities. This balance between statewide expectations and local control is essential for effective implementation and long-term success.

From a workforce readiness standpoint, SB 302 supports skills employers value deeply: sustained attention, interpersonal communication, self-regulation, and engagement in learning. Creating school environments where students can focus during instructional time and build healthy relationships with peers and educators' benefits not only academic outcomes, but long-term success beyond graduation.

For these reasons, **Aligned respectfully urges the committee to support Senate Bill 302.** We believe this legislation represents a thoughtful, research-backed step toward improving learning conditions for all Kansas students.

Thank you for your consideration.

Claudia Fury-Aguirre  
Manager of Kansas Policy and Outreach, Aligned

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Good afternoon. It is my privilege to be speaking to you today. My name is Ava Gustin and I served on the State Board of Education's Blue Ribbon Task Force for Student Screen Time as the co-chair.

I began writing in this journal at the ripe age of 10 and have continued it since. And you might be saying, that's great Ava, but no one really cares about a schoolgirl's journal. Well, I think this might be helpful because it paints a picture, a picture of my life.

It starts with joy and excitement. May 16th, 2018: "I just got out of school today! I am excited but sad because I had to say goodbye to my teachers and my friends." May 25th, 2018 "I don't like waking up early but I love school."

Things later changed. September 13th, 2019: "I'm not going to lie, I had some trouble adjusting to junior high (like crying for a straight week every night after school." August 23rd, 2020: "In middle school, if you aren't in love with Tik Tok, you don't fit in. I don't have social media, and people treat me differently, like I'm stupid." Young Ava was

struggling. She was starving for acceptance or to even relate to others, but that was something she would never get because of social media and smartphones.

And high school is where it gets worse, because Ava tries to get social media for a short while, because she sees adults encouraging her to do so. Every sport at school has a social media account, and she has to keep up. February 16th, 2022: "I come home and cry every night because I hate school so much." March 17th, 2020: "Maybe I should get Snapchat, but I don't want to." May 16th, 2022: "I feel like the constant problem is me. I feel like I don't relate to anyone."

And then in March of 2023, almost 16 year old Ava writes "I have an eating disorder now. Looks like all of my worries and insecurities from the past came through." May 2023: "The most worthless person I have ever met is myself. I have no impact on the world." August 8th, 2023: "I hate myself for not changing who I am to fit in like everyone else." And finally, December 27th, 2023: "My eating disorder has control over my life. This has been so

hard for so long, and I don't know where to go from here. I know going back to school will be terrible.”

No 16 year old, or person for that matter, should ever feel those thoughts.

How could a girl that loves school become someone who didn't trust her own worth? The answer is crystal clear. I never felt that I was enough because I never felt connected to my peers after early elementary school, when everyone began to get phones. My adolescence and teenage years were robbed by big tech companies. But now, you have the opportunity to change that outcome for Kansas students. Will you sit back and allow this story to continue, or will you rise up and defend Kansas children? I hope you make the right choice today, by voting in favor of Senate Bill 302. Thank you.



# PLAINVILLE

USD 270 • LEADING TO A LIFETIME OF SUCCESS

To whom it may Concern,

My name is Jhon Haehn, and I am currently serving as the principal of Plainville Jr/Sr High School in USD 270. This is my third year as a school administrator. I am writing to express my support for Senate Bill 302 and to share my professional perspective on the impact of cell phones and personal electronic devices in schools.

Based on my experience, cell phones and other devices have been an ongoing challenge within the school system for quite some time. With the expansion of technology and increased access, many students are frequently distracted during the school day. This has created a constant struggle for districts, administrators, and teachers as we work to maintain focused learning environments. Additionally, the overuse of these devices has negatively affected students' mental health and has contributed to increased levels of anxiety and depression among children.

The purpose of public education is to educate, inform, and expose students to career opportunities. Schools also play a vital role in helping students learn how to appropriately socialize with peers and adult authority figures, as well as in imparting civic and cultural values that are essential to the stability of our society. Unfortunately, cell phones and personal devices have impeded this progress and, at times, consumed large portions of the school day in a negative way.

While individual districts have been allowed to create and enforce their own cell phone policies, I believe it is important for state legislators to become involved and provide support through statewide legislation. A state law would allow districts to rely on clear legal guidance rather than engaging in repeated debates over personal rights and property. Similar to how K.S.A. 72-3120 supports compulsory attendance, Senate Bill 302 would help remove schools from the middle of these conflicts and allow administrators and teachers to focus on what truly matters—helping students succeed academically, socially, and personally.

In conclusion, I strongly support Senate Bill 302 both as a school administrator and as a parent. I believe this legislation will benefit students, families, and schools alike by restoring focus to the educational environment. Ultimately, I hope this law helps refocus attention where it belongs—for the benefit of our children, our state, and our country.

Sincerely,

Jhon Haehn  
Principal  
Plainville Jr/Sr High School  
USD 270

**Chris Rinehart M.Ed**  
Superintendent of Schools  
203 SE Cardinal, Plainville, KS 67663  
Phone 785.434.4678

**Jhon Haehn M.Ed**  
JR/SR High School Principal  
202 SE Cardinal, Plainville, KS 67663  
Phone 785.434.4547

**Mandi Dobson M.Ed**  
Elementary School Principal  
203 SE Cardinal, Plainville, KS 67663  
Phone 785.434.4508

Dear members of the Senate committee considering the adoption of SB302:

My name is Alison Hirons and I am currently in my 22<sup>nd</sup> year of teaching high school chemistry in the state of Kansas. Over the course of my career, I have had a front row seat to observe the effect that widespread adoption of smartphones and other personal electronic devices by our society has had on the educational landscape. I can't point to a single other factor that has had as much of a detrimental effect on the classroom climate as these devices. I know you will hear from a lot of experts about the myriad ways these devices are negatively impacting students, so I would like to focus on how current policies fall short in protecting the learning environment for both students and teachers.

My district adopted a personal electronic device policy that went into effect at the start of the 24-25 school year, prohibiting the use of these devices during instructional time but allowing them during passing periods and at lunch. I can tell you that, while having a policy is better than not having one, not much has really changed in terms of protecting the learning environment from the distraction posed by these devices. Even in classrooms where teachers are using a cell phone caddy and being as diligent as possible about enforcing the policy, students are still receiving and responding to notifications on smart watches and listening to air pods during instructional time. Students continue to be distracted by their devices because the devices continue to be accessible to them, even if physically separated from them by the caddy.

Not only do current policies fall short in eliminating student distraction for personal electronic devices, they also place an undue burden on teachers to enforce. They require each teacher to check each hour of each day that each of their students has put their phone in the caddy. And this joyless, exhausting, never-ending task doesn't end once the phones are the caddies. If there happens to be any down time at all during class, due to a student finishing an activity more quickly than their peers, or during a transition from one activity to another, there will inevitably be at least one student who asks if they can use their phone for some reason or another (reasons include texting their ride because plans have changed, submitting an assignment for another class, responding to a text from their mom, etc.). You can understand why many teachers quickly give up on trying to enforce a policy that requires this kind of constant vigilance, which just makes enforcement of the policy that much harder for those who don't give up on it.

For these reasons, I urge you to pass legislation like SB302, making personal electronic devices inaccessible to students for the entirety of the school day. This is the only way to ensure that these devices will not pose a distraction to students, and to free teachers from the never-ending burden of policing student use of these devices during instructional time. Teachers will be happier because they will be able to focus more of their energy on the aspects of their job that bring them joy, and students will be more successful because their attention won't be constantly fragmented by distractions from their devices.

Sincerely,

Alison Hirons

January 13, 2026

I am writing to express my strong support for passage of SB-302/HS 2421; a proposed bill establishing a no cell phone policy in schools during instructional hours. As an educator of over 40 years in the state of Kansas, I have seen many times how unrestricted cell phones are used negatively. This negative usage affects student learning, engagement, and overall school climate.

Cell phones are a constant distraction in the classroom. Even when used discreetly, they interrupt focus, reduce meaningful participation, and undermine academic progress. Studies have shown that limiting cell phones during the school day improves attention, comprehension, and test performance.

Studies will also show that cell phones increase anxiety, cyberbullying, and much social conflict among students. By banning cell phones from school buildings, it would give educators more time to focus on the learning environment in their classrooms. Interpersonal skills among students and adults are extremely low in our society at this time. Sadly, I have seen whole groups of students at tables during lunch on their cell phones. Students need to realize not everything in this life is solved through a cell phone, computer, or text message. By passing this law it would relieve teachers of the burden of enforcing inconsistent rules.

Eliminating cell phones does not curtail parent communication or safety. Every school in the state of Kansas consistently provides safety protocol on a yearly basis. Emergency procedures are already in place. One has to look at the Columbine Shootings on April 20, 1999 to understand that inconsistent and confusing cell phone messages being transmitted caused conflicts for people on the outside of the building. It has been mentioned that had the ambulances/first responders had earlier clearance into the building teacher Dave Sanders would not have bled to death and have lost his life. It was the conflicting cell phone messages that caused confusion.

Learning needs to be the main priority in our school buildings, and this bill would help protect that time. Students need to be focused on improving reading, writing, and practicing interpersonal skills. We need to go back to a society that communicates and listens to each other.

I urge the passage of this legislation to help provide schools with the tools to foster academic success, student well-being, and respectful learning environments. Thank you for your time and for your commitment to education.

Sincerely

Tim Laner

Indicate Proponent/Opponent/Neutral Testimony of SB 302

For the Senate Education Committee

Date of Hearing

Julia McMains

Orchestra Teacher at USD 273

Chair Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of Senate Bill 302 on behalf of Julia McMains.

I am a Kansas Teacher who teaches 4th-12th graders. Our district implemented Yonder bags three years ago at the secondary school. I was initially hesitant but found that it made for a more focused learning environment. I did not have to spend time policing cell phones in class and the students were not distracted by them. I take students to events hosted by other school districts, many which do not currently have cell phone policies. My students comment on how much easier it is for them to focus and show respect at these events compared to students who have access to their phones and miss a lot of learning opportunities.

I fully support regulating cell phone usage in schools, however, that policy must do the following to be successful:

- The school administration, not teachers, should be in charge of overseeing the execution of the policy.
- Allow school districts the flexibility to make the policy work for their district. Yonder bags will not work in all districts. Providing examples to districts will help them make informed decisions for their community.
- Provide a checks and balance system to make sure all districts are following the ban in an appropriate manner.
- Explicitly state when the policy is in effect. During school hours? On School Property? What about school sponsored activities and practices.
- Provide a guide for how the district is to handle any upset responses from parents/community members that do not support the ban.

Thank you for your time.

**Testimony in Support of Kansas SB 302  
Regarding the Ban on Student Cell Phone Use in Schools**

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Gabrielle Morris, and I am a Kansas parent writing in support of Senate SB302, which would limit the use of cell phones in schools.

As a parent, I strongly believe this bill is a necessary step toward improving student focus, mental health, and overall learning environments in our schools. While technology has an important role in education, unrestricted access to personal cell phones during the school day has become a significant distraction and, in many cases, a barrier to meaningful learning.

Teachers are increasingly tasked with managing phone-related disruptions rather than teaching. Students are pulled away from instruction by notifications, social media, and messaging, making it harder for them to engage fully in the classroom. Beyond academics, constant phone access contributes to increased anxiety, social comparison, and conflicts that often spill into the school day.

HB 2421 supports educators by creating clearer expectations and consistent boundaries, while also giving students the opportunity to be fully present—academically and socially—during school hours. Schools that have already implemented phone-free policies report improved attention, better peer interaction, and fewer disciplinary issues.

Importantly, this bill still allows schools and districts to implement reasonable exceptions for safety and medical needs, ensuring families can feel confident that students are supported while learning in a focused environment.

I urge you to support HB 2421 for the benefit of our students, teachers, and school communities across Kansas. Thank you for your time and for your continued commitment to education.

Respectfully,

**Gabrielle Morris**  
Kansas Parent

## Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education

**NAME:** Jessica Skoglund

**TITLE:** Kansas Teacher, Parent, and Citizen

**EMAIL ADDRESS:** [jessica.a.skoglund@gmail.com](mailto:jessica.a.skoglund@gmail.com)

**BILL NUMBER:** Bill SB 302

**PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL:** PROPONENT

**ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY:** WRITTEN

**DATE OF HEARING:** January 15, 2026

Chair Erickson & Members of the Committee,

As a high school teacher for over a dozen years, I support Senate Bill 302. There are numerous reasons I support this bill, but I will outline just a few.

First, research consistently supports that cell phones negatively impact education. In fact, a 2016 study in the *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research* found that the mere presence of a phone—even if stored out of sight—proved to be a distraction to learning. Students and teachers deserve to have a policy that prevents distractions and promotes learning.

Additionally, early research coming out on states that have enacted phone bans in schools shows that these bans work. Noted Wharton psychologist Angela Duckworth along with economists from Stanford University surveyed 20,000 public school teachers and found that more phone restrictions led to more focused classrooms. Initial data also shows that academics are higher in schools that do not permit students to keep phones on their person.

I would also like to address a few of the issues I have seen discussed about the bill. Many parents are concerned about reaching their student in case of a school emergency. While I understand this emotional argument as I am a parent myself, it is based more on fear than on evidence. A recent report by the Rockefeller Institute of Government found that “using phones during an active shooter event can endanger students by drawing attention to their location, overloading communication networks, and distracting them from following safety protocols.”

Furthermore, I have seen some legislators note that they want this issue to be one of local control. The bill already does that to some extent by allowing local school districts to implement specific policies and enforcement mechanisms. What is most important is that Kansas takes a consistent stand across the state in banning what the data overwhelming shows harms learning.

I will close with what Duckworth says about her survey of 20,000 teachers: “We have not found the educator who does not care about this issue and who doesn’t feel we should be doing more than what we’re doing right now.” I hope that you will help our teachers in doing more on this issue by voting to ban cell phones in schools in our state. Thank you for your consideration!

Jessica Skoglund

Olathe School District Teacher and Parent

Olathe

Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am writing this testimony in support of SB 302 and to share my concerns regarding the allowance of phone usage by students during the school day in our Kansas public schools. I am writing from the perspective of not only a concerned parent within the district, but also from the perspective of a large international engineering and construction firm headquartered in Kansas City, which is a major employer of new graduates in the region. As social media utilization and screen time have generally increased over the past decade, I have seen the social skills of our children negatively impacted. This has now extended to college-aged students and new young professionals. While there have always been generational differences that play out in society, communication has always served as the primary medium for people to develop interpersonal relationships and learn from one another. New grads who are dynamic in conversation and know how to work well in diverse groups of people are the ones who get ahead. Those who are buried in their phones and lack fully developed social capabilities lag behind.

Please strongly consider supporting this bell-to-bell, phone-free school policy so that our children are best positioned to develop healthy relationships with one another and succeed in life.

Respectfully,  
Jeff Smith

Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of legislation (SB 302) that promotes phone- and social media-free learning environments in Kansas schools. I am a parent of four children, three of whom are currently in the Shawnee Mission School District, ranging from elementary through high school. I am writing in strong support of this legislation based on concerns I have observed over many years as my children have progressed through our public schools.

One of my children entered middle school as a new student and struggled to make friends, not because of a lack of interest or effort, but because so many of her peers spent lunch periods and passing times on their phones. Instead of socializing and making eye contact, many children were isolated behind screens. This made an already difficult transition even harder and contributed to feelings of exclusion and loneliness.

As my child moved on to high school, my concerns deepened. This year, she has sat at a lunch table where a handful of fellow freshman girls were actively participating in a video chat app called "Amigo". They were chatting with adult men who, on multiple occasions, used racial slurs and exposed themselves to these girls. This occurred openly in the school cafeteria on personal devices.

Beyond these alarming safety concerns, my daughter regularly describes the constant social pressure created by phone and social media use. Instead of conversations, connections, or shared experiences, many students spend their time scrolling, comparing, and consuming content. This environment discourages real communication and makes it harder for students to build healthy friendships and a sense of belonging.

Phone-free school policies (**that are bell-to-bell, not just instructional time**) would not eliminate all challenges, but they would meaningfully improve the school environment. Schools that have implemented bell-to-bell phone-free policies report better student engagement, increased positive peer interaction, higher test scores, and improved mental health. These policies also allow educators to focus on teaching without competing against devices designed to capture attention at all costs. Research has proven over the last several years that this is what is best for our kids.

Importantly, these policies do not compromise safety or communication. Schools already have established systems for emergencies and parent contact. Removing phone and social media use during the school day helps protect students and encourages healthier habits that extend beyond the classroom.

I urge you to support this legislation and give Kansas schools the authority and consistency they need to create safer, more focused, and more connected learning environments for all students.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to Kansas families.

Respectfully,

Jeff and Maria Smith

Prairie Village, KS

Shawnee Mission School District

Dear members of the Kansas Senate Education Committee:

Thanks to each of you for your public service, I truly appreciate your time and work on behalf of Education in the state of Kansas. It has always been a mainstay of our state's lifestyle and economic appeal and an honoring of our long-term promise to residents now and in the future.

I am writing to lend hearty support of the Senate's newly filed "Phone-free schools bill (SB 302)". I have followed this concern for several years and I feel this should be passed as soon as possible. I know this will be considered on January 15th, so I want to urge you to vote "YES!"

My reasoning is that the proposal will assist with the following:

- Protect instructional time (aka improve student focus and learning).
- Help students learn to regulate their use of phones, social media, etc. - which is positively correlated to physical and mental/emotional health.
- Reduce student and teacher stress that can be attributed to the distraction devices can create.
- Increase interpersonal, face to face conversations - which is also correlated to better mental health and to adolescent development.

I watch my granddaughters (15 & 12) whose parents have been prudent and diligent with technology privileges. The access to phones for texting, scrolling, etc. creates a distraction that is not necessary, not conducive to learning and undermining of interpersonal growth in relationships. Please take the lead in setting a boundary that will serve the students, teachers, parents and even taxpayers well.

Thank you for voting "Yes" on SB302 for Bell to Bell Phone Free Schools in Kansas!

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