

Testimony LD 1234 – Hearing 4/16/2025

Imagine losing a child to a series of online harms. Then, imagine watching year after year as more children suffer similar preventable deaths while those with the power to stop the madness do nothing.

This is my worldview. I'm sharing it with you today because I want you to appreciate how truly fortunate you are. You have access to opportunities that I did not have. You possess knowledge that was not available a decade ago. You can protect the next generation from the perfect storm that blindsided the generation before them. You have the tools and the ability to choose. Things I did not have.

Making this choice should not be difficult. No child benefits from the constant presence of personal electronic devices in our schools. Not the ESL student who has become reliant on a device for translation rather than learning through observation and real-life interaction, nor the child with anxiety who calls their parent from the hallway instead of developing coping skills. Personal electronic devices do not belong in school - not in the classroom, where studies have repeatedly shown that they lead to learning loss; not in the lunchroom, where students should be practicing their social skills; not in the hallways, where they scroll between classes and are exposed to the latest drama that lingers into the next class; not anywhere. Students do not even need access to their phones in case of an emergency. School security experts state that phones make students less safe during emergency situations.

It is your responsibility to act in the best interests of the students, and you have the knowledge to do so. You can't unknow the fact that for over a decade, we have placed devices in the hands of children that grant them immediate access to drugs, predators, sextortionists, dangerous online challenges, eating disordered and suicide-promoting content. You can't unknow that the tacit endorsement of these products by schools has helped to normalize screen-to-face interactions instead of face-to-face conversations. You can't unknow that apps and gaming devices are intentionally designed to addict children. What I would give to have had the knowledge you have today a decade ago.

It's your choice, but their well-being is at stake. That is why I implore you to implement a statewide bell-to-bell restriction on personal electronic devices for grades K-12 and ensure that no student is required to have a phone or social media to participate in school or after-school programs.

I appreciate your consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,

Deb Mann Schmill
Parent of Becca - Forever 18
Founder and President
Becca Schmill Foundation
www.beccaschmillfdn.org
781-724-5653

