

Melanie Applegate  
Scarborough  
LD 1234

Dear Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

I am writing in support of LD 1234: An Act to Ban Cellular Telephones from Public School Classrooms.

As a doctorally prepared nurse practitioner, student of public health and mom of two, I urge you to pass this bill not just as a matter of education policy, but as a matter of public health.

We now know that smartphones—and particularly the apps they host—are designed to be addictive. The same principles that apply to slot machines and other behavioral addictions are embedded into these devices: variable rewards, infinite scrolling, push notifications, and social validation loops. These are not neutral tools. They are products engineered to capture attention and keep users coming back, often to the detriment of their mental health, focus, and well-being.

And our kids are especially vulnerable.

The adolescent brain is still developing—especially the regions responsible for impulse control, emotional regulation, and long-term decision-making. Smartphones take advantage of these developmental windows, often leading to compulsive use, anxiety, sleep disruption, and social withdrawal. These are not just distractions. They are health-harming products.

And they don't belong in classrooms.

Some people may feel this is a personal choice, a decision for individual families. But that argument ignores the collective impact. Just like secondhand smoke once polluted classrooms and hallways, we are now seeing the effects of “secondhand screen time.” A phone buzzing in one backpack distracts multiple students. A social media conflict in the hallway can derail an entire class period. This is a collective environment, and it requires collective protection.

We've been here before. There was a time—not long ago—when cigarettes were allowed in schools. Faculty lounges were full of smoke, and students could sneak off to smoke in bathrooms. We didn't yet fully understand the risks—or we chose to ignore them. But once we knew better, we acted.

We are at that point again.

The science is clear. The health impacts are real. And the longer we wait, the more damage we allow.

LD 1234 is a bold, necessary step toward creating healthier, more focused, and more equitable learning environments. It is a step toward protecting not just students' education, but their long-term health.

I respectfully urge you to pass this bill and help Maine put student well-being first.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to the future of our children.

Sincerely,  
Melanie Applegate  
Scarborough, Maine