

Testimony in Support of LD 1234

Presented to the Maine Legislature | Crystal Schreck, co-founder Turn the Tide Coalition

Good morning Senator Rafferty, Representative Campbell and members of the Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Crystal Schreck, and I'm a Falmouth parent of three school-aged children and an advocate for student safety and well-being in Maine's schools. I'm here to speak in strong support of LD 1234 — legislation that would implement a bell-to-bell cell phone ban in classrooms across the state.

This issue isn't just about distractions or declining test scores, which you'll hear plenty about today. Rather, it's about creating school environments where kids can be fully present, learn deeply, and develop real, meaningful connections with their peers and teachers — without the constant intrusion of a device that competes for their attention.

But...I really would like to focus my message today on the people in our schools who are being asked to bear the brunt of this problem without any real support: **our teachers.**

Currently, we place the burden of enforcing unclear and inconsistent cell phone policies entirely on our teachers. In many schools, enforcement varies depending on each teacher's classroom management approach, which creates an impossible situation. Teachers are often forced to choose between maintaining focus in their classrooms—at the risk of conflict with students or parents—or turning a blind eye and allowing phones to become a distraction. This inconsistency not only undermines their authority, but also leads to a fragmented experience for students from one class to the next.

This is profoundly unfair. Our teachers should not have to act as the technology police. They are skilled professionals who are already stretched thin - emotionally, physically, and professionally.

In recent months, I've personally spoken with dozens of teachers—from middle schools to high schools, across different districts—who all told me that they strongly support a bell-to-bell phone ban. But they also shared that they weren't comfortable testifying today. Why? Because they're concerned about potential pushback—from parents, from administrators, or from colleagues who may see things differently.

That should be deeply troubling to all of us. The people who are in the classrooms every day, who see the damage being done by unrestricted phone use - they're afraid to speak out publicly. So today I am speaking for them. They deserve to be heard, and they deserve a policy that **supports** them, not one that leaves them to manage this on their own.

LD 1234 is not about being anti-technology. It's about being **pro-structure**, **pro-learning**, and **pro-teacher**. When we put clear policies in place - policies that say phones are off-limits from bell to bell - we take that pressure off individual teachers and create a consistent, school-wide culture of focus and respect.

Today, I urge you to listen to the teachers who want this change, but can't be here to advocate for themselves. I urge you to put their needs, and our children's well-being, at the center of this discussion. Let's give our educators the tools and the support they need to do their jobs effectively.

Thank you for your time, and for considering this critical step toward healthier and more focused school environments for everyone.