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LD 1234

My name is Tyler Despain and I have been in IT for about a decade. During this time I've managed the technology programs, help desks, and cybersecurity initiatives for dozens of different companies and hundreds of users. I own and operate my own IT and Cybersecurity company. Through this company I have been the contracted IT Administrator for a private school that primarily catered to special needs children. I have a unique view of the struggle educators and school staff face when phones are permitted in the classroom. The school already had to invest significant sums of money into the technology provided to the students. On top of that, the school also had to invest money into protecting those students from the danger that lurks on the internet. As the IT Director I was in charge of establishing and maintaining a sufficient program that monitored student device activity to ensure that technology use was safe and productive.

However, all of the money, time, and resources invested into protecting children while they are at school meant nothing when children are able to bypass every and all school filtering and restrictions by using a personal device. It was a constant battle between teachers, administration, and myself to figure out how we could protect ALL students in the school from the danger presented by the internet and smart phones. What did it matter that one child had no phone or sufficient controls and the school systems had sufficient protections when a single child with an unfiltered smart phone could expose all other children to anything available on the internet?

The advent of AI only made this worse. What was before just a fight to prevent children from accessing inappropriate content or talking to strangers online became so much worse. Students were using AI chatbots to simulate relationships. Those who already struggled socially, withdrew further as their smart phone offered them a quick fix to their loneliness. However, this quick fix is fake. It is fleeting and in the long run only succeeds in hampering children socially for the future.

Smart phones are dangerous tools that do not belong in schools. They disrupt a child's normal development and prevent appropriate learning. I urge the legislative body to vote in favor of LD1234 to protect the children of Maine.