

Chairpersons and members of the committee,

My name is Jill Sady. I am born and raised in Maine, and now raising my three children in Yarmouth, Maine.

I am in support of LD 1234 and banning cellular telephones from school classrooms.

I want this ban for my children and their mental health and well being, but today, I want to speak up for our teachers and administrators—the people who keep our schools running every day, who are often under immense pressure. Right now, we face a teacher retention crisis. The *Portland Press Herald* recently reported on the teacher shortage across Maine, and it's no surprise why: our educators are exhausted and burnt out. We ask them to teach, to nurture, to manage behavior, and increasingly—to police phones. That last part? It's avoidable.

Removing phones from the school day is one of the simplest and most effective ways to ease the burden on teachers. When classrooms are phone-free from bell to bell, teachers no longer waste valuable time at the start of every class asking students to put devices away. They aren't forced into endless debates over “just checking the time” or “I'm only using it for music.” Clear, consistent policies eliminate the gray area and empower teachers to focus on what they're there to do: teach.

And it's not just about saving time—it's about safety and dignity. We've seen far too many cases of teachers and students being filmed without consent and posted online. That's not just inappropriate—it's demoralizing. A phone-free classroom protects teachers and students from that kind of violation and fosters a culture of respect.

The benefits go beyond the classroom. When phones are removed from the school day, administrators also see a major shift. Fewer conflicts. Fewer discipline referrals. Fewer social media-fueled fights. In fact, Catrina Bailey, principal of Paul Laurence Dunbar High School, shared during a “Phone-Free Schools on a Budget” webinar that collecting phones at the start of the day actually saves her time throughout her day. Imagine that—saving time while improving school culture.

Cyberbullying, sextortion, and viral fight videos—these aren't rare. A *New York Times* review of over 400 fight videos across more than a dozen states showed a disturbing trend: students using phones and social media to provoke, film, and spread violent incidents. In some heartbreaking cases, students have even died. That's what's at stake. Every one of these incidents takes hours, even days, of staff and counselor time to address—time that could be used to support students in meaningful, proactive ways.

Some may argue that we should let teachers decide for themselves, but this is a matter of consistency. According to the National Education Association, 83% of teachers back a full-day, bell-to-bell, phone ban. The Association of American Educators found that

70% of teachers ranked phone use as one of their top concerns. And in New York, NYSUT—the teachers' union—is actively pushing for a bell-to-bell ban. This isn't just about preference—it's about protecting time, energy, and mental health of our teachers and students.

We have a chance to support our educators across the state—not just with words, but with action. We cannot leave this important issue up to individual school boards who are already strapped for time and resources. This must come from the state legislature. A clear, statewide bell-to-bell, phone-free policy would provide the consistency and support our schools need—lifting a daily burden from teachers and administrators, improving school culture, and protecting the mental health and academic focus of our students.

Thank you,

Jill Sady

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Yarmouth
LD 1234

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