

Maggie Caron
Scarborough
LD 1234

Dear Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

I am writing in strong support of LD 1234, which would establish a bell-to-bell phone-free school day. This bill is not just about reducing distractions—it's about supporting teachers, who are the backbone of our schools.

Right now, Maine is facing a critical teacher shortage, as recently reported by the Portland Press Herald (March 23, 2025). Educators across the state are leaving the profession, and districts are struggling to recruit and retain qualified staff. Many cite burnout, increased student behavior challenges, and the constant pressure to manage digital distractions as key reasons for leaving.

Without a consistent, school-wide policy, teachers are left to enforce cell phone rules multiple times a day—checking for devices, managing pushback, and dealing with the social fallout that often accompanies phone-related conflicts. This is exhausting, inefficient, and pulls time and energy away from what teachers are trained and passionate about: teaching.

A bell-to-bell phone-free policy, where devices are collected once at the start of the day, provides structure and consistency. It reduces stress on teachers, improves classroom behavior, and fosters more focused, respectful learning environments.

This isn't just a local movement—it's part of a growing national call for change. Leading national organizations and experts — including the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, New York State United Teachers, Jonathan Haidt (author of *The Anxious Generation*), and Sherry Turkle — have signed an open letter from the nonprofits Fairplay and the Phone-Free Schools Movement calling for phone-free schools now.

“Every child deserves a learning environment that supports healthy development and academic success,” the letter states. “That is why, as organizations and experts working toward the well-being of young people, we are coming together to call on all schools to enact a robust, ‘bell-to-bell’ phone-free school policy.”

In the face of Maine's teacher shortage, we can't afford not to pass this bill. LD 1234 offers a practical, research-backed solution that directly supports teachers, improves the classroom experience, and promotes student well-being.

Please vote in favor of LD 1234—for the sake of our students, and for the educators we urgently need to support and retain.

Thank you for your time and service.

Sincerely,
Maggie Caron
Scarborough
RN and Parent