

Lucie Scholz
Cape Elizabeth
LD 1234

Lucie Scholz, LCSW
Co-founder, Cape Alliance for Thoughtful Tech
April 15th, 2025

Dear Maine Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

Thank you for your commitment to policies that support Maine students. I would prefer to be there in person to speak directly to you all, but unfortunately I will be traveling so I am submitting my support here for LD 1234: An Act to enforce bell-to-bell cell phone policy for all Maine Schools.

I wrote a testimony and it was everything I wanted to say. Our son (14) and daughter (12) were also writing testimony with what they wanted to say. We shared as we wrote and decided instead to combine our outcomes, listed below. Being well aware that you all will be hearing from many people today and reading a lot of testimonies, we thought this might be a more digestible format.

I consider all of the conversations I've had with clients, my own kids, school facility and admin in many schools, other parents and other kids, friends, community members, and co-activists in Maine and beyond, as "research" on this issue. Our sons research is his lived and shared experience, and our daughters is part experiential, part anticipatory. My clear understanding from all of the above is that the evidence is incredibly strong for this decision to be made FOR the safety and wellbeing of all of the students, as soon as possible. Why are we waiting?

*They are too young and their brains too under developed for us to expect that kids are equipped to respectfully handle much of the power they have been given with these tiny computers, in a large social environment.

*These smart devices give the ability to create destructive social outcomes with the various options and platforms they offer. We have the power to protect them from this in schools, and the onus is on ALL of us do it, NOW.

*Kids will find a way to use devices in destructive ways, if given the opportunity. They NEED universal boundaries enforced, not a phone hotel in a class here and there that they will work around however they can.

*Many faculty and admin don't know the extent to which kids are abusing the devices during school hours.

*These devices create anxiety throughout the day, for many reasons, especially when they are omnipresent and woven into the social framework. Why aren't we protecting their mental health when we know that giving them a break from this is the right thing to do?

*School admin and teachers need our support on this. They are exhausted by having to deal with issues around smart devices all day, but many don't want to have to enforce it for fear of repercussions from parents.

*MANY parents don't want their kids to have a smartphone on them during school (or otherwise) but also don't want their kid to be the only one without one.

*Lets give the support admin, faculty and parents need and help delay/limit device and social media use, by setting a healthy social norm: no phones in school, learn to feel safe, connect and communicate, focus and problem solve, be in the moment and reduce anxiety.

*Schools need to set the example by initiating this healthy social norm, and families will follow because most of them want to. Each family is doing their best but can't work optimally in isolation from schools, because it is the common ground for all parents and kids.

*It can be at very little to no cost, phones just need to be away for the day. It can be in

a two dollar pouch in a file cabinet, it's not that complicated!

*It is working in other states, with only positive outcomes, what more evidence do we need?

*Let's be a state that supports our faculty and admin by understanding that they need assistance in making bell-to-bell policy the norm.

*Let's show families that we care about all of this so they are not living in device isolation.

*The only way to make this work for everyone involved is to make it a state mandate.

*Let's add Maine to the growing list of states that are opting to protect their students from worsening mental health issues, more deviant behavior, more online bullying, and poorer test scores. I can't think of one good reason not to.

Thank you,
Lucie Scholz, LCSW