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LD 1234

My name is Karen Richards Toothaker. I am a lifelong resident of Winthrop, Maine. I am submitting written testimony in support of LD1234 An Act to Ban Cellular Telephones from Public School Classrooms.

In my 40 years as an Early Childhood Educator, I have witnessed the negative effects of cell phones in the cognitive, social, and emotional development of children. I am currently witnessing the negative effects of cell phones when I present as a guest author in classrooms at Elementary and Middle schools across the State of Maine. My experiences are supported by research across the board and include:

- reduced cognitive function
- impaired memory
- drastically reduced attention span
- lack of focus
- absence of critical thinking and reasoning
- evidence of reduced vocabulary
- decreased inability to express ideas
- increased anxiety
- increased stress
- decreased ability to play
- reduced ability to interact face-to-face
- decreased ability to regulate emotions
- decreased empathy
- decreased ability to function as a member of a group
- decreased autonomy, shifting confidence from within to external

I support the passage of LD1234 to give all students in Maine an opportunity to reverse these negative effects in their cognitive, social, and emotional development. I acknowledge that cell phones have a place in current society and do serve a positive, helpful purpose when used as a tool. However, when these tools become crutches and replacement realities, they become more harmful than helpful. A cellular telephone ban from public school classrooms will give children a break from this harmful effect and offer them cleared space to absorb the high quality cognitive, social, and emotional experiences offered by our public schools here in Maine.

Karen Richards Toothaker
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