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To Whom It May Concern,

I am a clinical mental health counselor (LCPC-c) who has worked with children and their families and seen first-hand the impact that phones have had in the development of children. Phones have become an important part of society and a great help in many ways. However, children with developing minds should not be expected to know intrinsically how to govern themselves on these complex devices. Especially where tech companies have “hacked psychology,” as stated by Jonathan Haidt, to specifically draw children in for the companies’ continued financial gain and to the child’s detriment. I wish to address a few specific reasons why phones should not be allowed in the classroom; attention fragmentation, social development, and overall mental health concerns.

We are seeing a tremendous increase in ADHD-like symptoms due to attention fragmentation that occurs by the nature of phone use. Just having their phone in the vicinity, our brains are wired to “check” in regular increments, negating the ability to sustain focus on any given task. We often as a society experience phantom buzzes and rings, triggering us to again “check” our phones. The lack of sustained focus over time will drastically impact our children’s capacity to learn as much information and complete tasks in a timely manner.

Historically, the social development of children has always been in the school yard, playground, and in playdates. In other words, development happens in face-to-face interaction. This is an incredibly important aspect of their development. With the increase in technology use, our children have had less and less interpersonal interaction and have not developed so many of these important skills. School has traditionally been the place that much of this skill development occurs. If we continue to allow phones in the classrooms, we will continue to stifle their ability to learn and make important connections for life. I have worked with countless youth who struggle with social connection because of the dependency on phones and lack of in-person experiences.

Lastly, the growing mental health concerns for our youth is staggering. The book *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt, beautifully outlines the stark decline of our youth’s mental health since the rise of phone use in 2010. There is a sharp increase in depression, anxiety and suicidality as the use of phones has increased. Again, children do not have developed brains nor the skills to say no to the dopamine hit that a phone can offer. We, as the adults in their lives, cannot give them this reckless autonomy when it can so easily devastate their mental health. We have to provide guard rails and boundaries as they learn and grow to help them succeed. As a whole, we have to work together as a society to solve this conundrum. We are the first generation to parent in a world of smart phones. There has been so much we have not known or understood. Now that we have clear measurable data, we need to act quickly and systemically. If parents and educators can work together, we may be able to change the trajectory that our children are on.

Most sincerely,  
Camille Thayer