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LD 1234

Testimony in Support of Cell Phone Restrictions in Schools

Dear Members of the Committee,

Thank you for your continued dedication to Maine's students and schools. I am writing to support LD 1234 and to share two low-cost, practical strategies for bell to bell restrictions on cell phone use in schools—approaches that have been successfully implemented in other parts of the country and were highlighted in a recent "Phone Free Schools on a Budget Webinar", which can be found here along with a great tool kit for school administrators and video from January where a Vermont Representative presented similar legislation to their state.

One common question I've heard is: How can schools affordably implement cell phone restrictions? The good news is that there are simple, proven systems already in use that require minimal funding and no ongoing subscription or tech investment.

For example:

A middle school in Washington, D.C., uses pencil pouches to collect phones each morning.

Dunbar High School in Dayton, Ohio, uses manila envelopes stored alphabetically in milk crates organized by grade. These are kept in a locked records closet on a rolling cart in the main office.

School in Vermont uses an old wooden mail organizer (as detailed in webinar linked above).

These systems are both low-tech and highly effective. By collecting phones at the start of the school day, rather than having teachers manage them (or not) in each class, these schools have drastically reduced the time spent policing phones throughout the day. Teachers are able to spend more time on instruction, and administrators report fewer discipline issues related to social media and digital distraction.

In short, cell phone restrictions do not have to be expensive or complicated to work. What they do require is a clear, consistent policy and a commitment to reclaiming the school day for learning and connection. Phones, personal electronic devices and even our kids own school-issued laptops are increasingly becoming a distraction to core learning. Having this kind of leadership and policy in place at the state level will help strengthen so many individual school districts that are trying to do this on their own.

I hope this information is helpful as you consider policy options to support Maine's educators and students. Thank you to Senator Brenner and Representative Campbell for this bill and to this committee again for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,