



April 15, 2025

Education and Cultural Affairs Committee Maine State Legislature Cross Building, Room 208 111 Sewall Street  
Augusta, ME 04330

**RE: Support for LD 1234 - An Act to Ban Cellular Telephones from Public School Classrooms**

Dear Committee Members:

As Executive Director of Teens to Trails, an organization that supports 60+ school-based Outdoor Clubs across Maine serving thousands of students annually, I write in strong support of LD 1234.

Our work connecting Maine youth to life-changing outdoor experiences has given us a front-row seat to the impacts of constant phone use on students' wellbeing, ability to make meaningful connections with their peers and engagement in their studies and other acts that require concentration. When students participate in our multi-school camping trips, we make a strong recommendation that our time together be phone-free, and it creates transformative results:

- Students develop genuine face-to-face connections with peers and mentors
- Youth engage fully with nature, gaining mental health benefits impossible with digital distractions
- We observe dramatic increases in conversation, creativity, and problem-solving skills
- Students report feeling "more themselves" and less anxious during these phone-free experiences

At a fall camping trip of high school students in the Camden Hills, one group came up with a phrase that set the stage for a great weekend, "Hang Up and Hang Out, Outside!". I'd like to share an especially poignant excerpt that a student shared after our trip:

***We spent the next few hours helping the park rangers with yard work. After a few too many jumps into leaf piles, we enjoyed lunch and went on a hike, which was a highlight for me. The foliage was in full swing, and it was perfect hiking weather. We paused at an outlook to look across Penobscot Bay with views reaching Mount Desert Island. Two bald eagles flew over. As we hiked up, we sang and challenged each other with riddles. It was refreshing to be disconnected from my phone. In fact, I'd left it behind at the campsite. As we hiked, I couldn't remember the last time I hadn't brought my phone with me.***



***As we broke down the campsite at the end of the weekend, “hang up and hang out” echoed in my mind. In my daily life, my phone is a safety net. During any awkward silence or lull in the conversation, like many of my peers, I resort to my phone. This camping trip reminded me that everything is sweeter when you go outside. If it weren’t for Teens to Trails and my outdoor club, I wouldn’t have gone camping or met students from across the state. I also made more meaningful connections with kids from my own school. I’m grateful that organizations like Teens to Trails and outdoor clubs exist, so that high school students like me can unplug outside.***

I urge your support of important initiatives that help Maine students thrive.

Sincerely,

Alicia Heyburn, Executive Director

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