

To: Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, Maine Legislature

From: Frank Quinn (Scarborough, ME 04074)

RE: Support of LD170

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Learning is so essential to almost everything that we do. We begin learning before we go to school. We learn how to learn and so many other things when we are in school. We are still learning after we graduate from school and go on with our lives and our careers. What we learn in school and how we learn from being in the classroom makes a big difference in how we will learn throughout all the years of our life. Learning is so important for all of us. We do find out that we do learn differently from one another, but being in the classroom where the teacher is offering us instruction is so important to how we develop and how we make sense out of what we are listening to.

When we are young and we go to school the focus is on learning new information and new skills. We sit in the classroom and listen to the teacher explain what we are there to learn. We have to follow what the teacher is saying to us. We have to listen and find ways to take in the information that is being explained to us. When we are in the classroom other students may ask questions. As information gets explained our way of thinking can broaden, and we can see that there are many different ways that we can learn what the teacher is trying to explain to us.

We need to take time to listen and to pay attention. We need to take time to find ways that we can take the information that we are hearing and make what we are hearing meaningful to us. There is a process to learning. It does not just happen “all of a sudden”, and we can move on. Having access to cellphones can be so disruptive to the process we are going through to learn new information. Having cellphones can interrupt the process that is learning. Using our cellphones in the classroom can remove us from the process that is unfolding so we can “take in” and use new information to help us learn.

Teachers are so good at instructing us to learn new information and how to put to use the new information that we are learning. If we are having a hard time engaging in the process or we are not able to focus we can/ will grab our cellphone and stop the process that the teacher is trying to get us involved in. Cellphone use will and can interrupt the learning process. Learning takes time. Learning requires effort. Learning actually evolves over time as we work to get involved in what is happening in the classroom. If we use our cellphones while we are in the classroom, and the teacher is teaching we will lose out on an opportunity to move forward in our learning experience.

Learning takes time. We do have to learn to focus. We do have to learn how we learn and what we can do to make learning work for us. Using our cellphones will take us away from this unique and engaging environment. Our skills build up over time. Our learning also builds on the foundation that we have established from our early moments in the classroom. The more that we have disrupted the process and not focused on the foundation that we can build on the more trouble we will have trying to learn. Having access to our cellphones in the classroom is not helping us to learn new information.

I find that people who have learning disabilities or do not have the patience to learn new skills will revert to their cellphones as a way out of their own intellectual turmoil. We have to be patient and take time to learn new skills. We can learn new skills if we take time to focus and try to be open to see how our brains process new information so we put this new information in areas of our brain that we can call upon when we need to use what we are learning. I do believe that learning is a process, and all of us can develop ways for our brains to work and to take in new information for us to have. I do believe that having cellphones and being able to use them when we are in the learning environment will only disconnect us from what teachers are trying to teach us to do.

The other thing that I find disturbing is that if we have cellphones with us we can get calls or text messages that might be disturbing and/ or unsettling to us. Having access to troubling messages will only stop us from learning. There is so much we can control, and there is so much we can not control. In an environment where we are learning I can try to learn and be involved in the process. When things happen all around me that can take my focus away from what I am in school to do I can get very disturbed and so discouraged. There are other times and places in the day where people can use cellphones, but we should value the learning environment and know that what we are trying to do is very important to us. Our focus has to be on learning new information and building new skills so we can grow intellectually and mature emotionally.

Let us value and appreciate what we are doing in school and what the teachers are trying to do to help us learn new skills. I am still taking classes to learn and I also attend day long seminars at different times. Before the class starts or the seminar begins the instructor will come out to tell all of us who are attending to “shut off” our cellphones. They do not want to hear any phones ringing nor do they want anyone to get distracted by any phones ringing. I do find that interesting, but all of us are always carrying cellphones, and we do not pay attention to the distraction the phone can cause to us or others. I do not want any student who is in the classroom to learn to be distracted from what is happening by having a phone ring or someone next to them talking on the phone to someone else.

I do support the idea where students go to school without bringing or using their cellphones in the learning environment. We have to put our focus on learning and not being distracted by having cellphones in the classroom or the school when that is a time for us to learn and grow personally and become mature so we can act more responsibly and with more care to and for others. School can be the ideal environment for us to begin and build on that learning process that will last a lifetime. Let us not short circuit what is so essential to our growth and development and maturity.