

Testimony in support of LD 1234

I am writing as a parent of a 4- and 6-year-old and the director of a Maine grantmaking foundation that supports nonprofits efforts to connect youth and adults to the natural environment.

Over the last few months, I've been attending meetings at our local public school regarding phones and screen use. Hosted by Cape Alliance for Thoughtful Tech, I am one of the few parents in the room whose children are fortunately young enough that smart phone use in school is not an issue. Hearing from the parents with older children, I've heard story after story of what's to come if policy is not implemented at the state level. It is significant enough that I've witnessed many parents in tears over this issue. I've heard from teacher friends that phones have been a significant distraction and that social interaction has decreased during times when students used to be playing and interacting. Teachers should not have to manage this and parents should not have to worry about what the youngest learners are being exposed to in school. Given the nearly constant use of smart phones and social media, and the resulting negative mental, physical, social and emotion health implications, Maine learners of all ages deserve at least a six-hour break where they can optimize learning and connect with their teachers and one another in real time. When you spend time with young people, parents, and/or educators you likely know we don't need research to "prove" that smart phones are having a negative impact, but plenty of research backs up what we know to be true. My hope is that the research, testimonials from parents and teachers, and common sense will lead the way so that by the time my young children and their peers reach middle school, smart phones in school are a thing of the past.

Hannah Quimby