

Written Testimony in Support of LD 1234 – An Act to Support Phone- and Social Media-Free Schools

Submitted by: Dr. Samantha Dunn, DO

Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrician and Parent

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To the Honorable Members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is **Dr. Samantha Dunn**, and I am a developmental-behavioral pediatrician and the parent of young children in Scarborough, Maine. I am writing today in strong support of **LD 1234 – An Act to Support Phone- and Social Media-Free Schools**.

In both my professional work and personal life, I see firsthand the ways in which smartphones and social media are negatively impacting the development and well-being of children and adolescents. I care for patients every day who are experiencing heightened anxiety, depression, attention difficulties, and social challenges—many of which are directly tied to their use of phones and engagement with social media platforms.

Smartphones and social media are designed to be addictive. They are engineered to capture a child's attention, reward impulsivity, and promote constant comparison. When these technologies are present during the school day, they significantly interfere with students' ability to focus, engage, learn, and build healthy relationships.

LD 1234 represents a critical step forward in addressing this growing crisis by supporting the creation of learning environments that are free from the distractions and harms of constant phone and social media use. By removing these tools from classrooms and common areas, we give students the opportunity to:

- Reconnect with their peers in real time
- Focus more deeply on their academic work
- Develop stronger emotional regulation and communication skills
- Take a much-needed break from the pressures of online life

As a parent, I know how hard it is to set boundaries around devices in a world that is increasingly connected. Schools have a unique opportunity—and responsibility—to create spaces where children can thrive offline, without the constant pull of their screens. Supporting **LD 1234** will send a powerful message that Maine prioritizes the mental health, safety, and full developmental needs of its students.

This is not a rejection of technology, but rather a thoughtful and necessary boundary that empowers children to be present, engaged, and ready to learn.

Thank you for considering this testimony and for your leadership on this important issue. I urge you to vote **in favor of LD 1234** for the sake of our children's health, education, and future.

Sincerely,

Dr. Samantha Dunn, DO

Parent on young children & Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrician
Scarborough, Maine