

April 16th, 2025

To the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

My name is Noah DeLorme. I'm a software developer and parent of three children attending Maine public schools. I'm submitting the following testimony on behalf of my oldest child, a middle school student who believes, as I do, that **LD 1234 ought to pass**. That all Maine children deserve access to education that is truly connected—to their teachers and classmates and to the present moment, without the myriad distractions that the mere presence of smartphones creates, let alone the many other layers of complications and harms to learning, development, and relationships. Sometimes directly and at other times through opportunity cost.

For example, this fall, when our high school experimented with a “phone-free week” administrators commented happily about how the volume of conversation had turned way up in the lunchroom. Things were more boisterous. Students invented games such as sliding water bottles down a lunch table, trying to get as close to the edge as possible without toppling over. Life turned up.

As you'll read, my daughter doesn't yet have a smartphone and won't until high school, which makes her part of a very small and distinct minority at middle school. While this has been an ongoing conversation in our family and at times causes intense feelings of “FOMO”, she has also thanked us for holding out. And yet smartphones—as well as texting by smartwatch—affect her because their use and presence at school is so pervasive and because—without having the 6 hour break that school could provide, the addiction entrenches itself in young people, accelerated by social pressure and adult acceptance.

Given how I spend my days, I'm not anti-tech. My interest in coding developed as a teenager and I see plenty of opportunities for kids to engage with technology at school in novel, creative ways that often have exciting social dimensions—such as our award-winning robotics team. But phones aren't it. Phones in student hands will never bring enough good to the table to be justified. Students, parents, and even educators themselves are caught in a collective trap that schools—with the help of legislatures—have the power to release. Let's step to the right side of history now and enhance the educational opportunities for all students in our state.

Thank you for your consideration,

Noah DeLorme

**Testimony from a 6th grade student:**

Smartphones, they're a big thing in middle and high school. Plus, they're considered super cool. *But are they just as good as they are cool?*

I am in 6th grade and I don't have one (thank goodness) and yet I would say they are a part of my everyday life because they're at school. Kids are always doing the latest TikTok dances or talking about what someone said to to someone else on the 6th grade group chat. I think what some kids don't realize is why they do all this? Keeping up with all that's going on can be too much. And to be like all the other people can be too hard. When we are at this age we are trying to figure out who we are and what we are going to be. But when you plop a cellphone in front of a kid's face, it's hard to get it back, especially if they can have it with them all day, even at school. And they start moulding into someone they're not, someone that they see on the screen who looks like the perfect Barbie doll.

Giving a kid a cellphone is like taking away bits of their future and some of their childhood, replacing it with pressure and bad thoughts. Some kids can't handle all those bad feelings that come out of having one, but some parents can't handle their kids feeling sad and left out in the first place, so they do what makes them happy and give it to them anyways.

It's not just the people with the cellphones that feel bad, it's also the kids being left out of what's happening online and in texts. Friend groups split up because of cell phones, people can feel shameful and feel like they're not as good or cool as everyone else. And people can change completely—and not always for the best.

So... instead of bringing more cellphones in, let's take some more out. If we don't take action, the pressure comes on to younger and younger kids.