

Maggie Caron
Scarborough
LD 2052

Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

Thank you for your time and for the work you do on behalf of Maine's students and families. I respectfully urge you to pass LD 2052.

As a parent of two students in the Scarborough school system, I am increasingly concerned about the amount of time my children spend on screens during the school day. By way of example, my younger child, a first grader, reads books online using the Epic app and practices math on a separate app called Starfall. While these tools are often presented as educational, independent evaluations—such as those from Internet Safety Labs—have raised serious concerns about both, including data-sharing practices with large technology companies like Google and Meta. As a parent, I am not confident that these companies prioritize my children's best interests. My older child has had similar experiences.

Epic and Starfall are designed using the same attention-economy principles as commercial apps—quick rewards, constant novelty, and gamified features. Research suggests that excessive exposure to these designs can undermine early reading stamina and self-regulation. While effective teachers can create meaningful learning experiences with almost any tool, that does not mean the tool itself is well suited for young learners.

Specific concerns with Epic include students spending instructional time creating avatars, swiping to reach game-like features, or rushing through books to earn digital rewards. One teacher shared that a student “read” 40 books in a 30-minute silent reading block simply to unlock app rewards.

More broadly, educational technology companies are profit-driven, and their goals do not always align with what is best for students. At the same time, school systems are often asked to rely on assurances that these tools are safe and effective, without full transparency or meaningful oversight.

I am asking for your help in ensuring that parents and policymakers have access to accurate, concrete data about how educational technology is being used in our schools. With better information, we can make more informed decisions that truly support student learning, safety, and well-being.

Thank you for your consideration,
Maggie