EDUCATE MAINE

Testimony by Jason Judd, Ed.D., Executive Director, Educate Maine

To The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs on
Thursday, January 22, 2026, 10:00am

In Support of

LD 2052: Resolve, to Study the Use of Technology in Classrooms and Study Safeguards Related to Its Use

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, I am writing to express my support for LD 2052: Resolve, to Study the Use of Technology in Classrooms and Study Safeguards Related to Its Use. Educate Maine is a business-led education organization focused on increasing education attainment. Our mission is to ensure that Maine people are prepared to succeed in education and careers, and that all Maine people reach their highest educational potential.

Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) is a trusted organization to carry out the study described in this resolve to better understand the use of technology in Maine classrooms. It will be helpful to hear directly from educators and education associations if they have access to the comprehensive data mentioned in order to provide a meaningful report back to the Legislature.

We are particularly interested in the connection between student technology use and brain science. There are a variety of national studies focused on this particular area. It will be essential to not only understand what is happening in Maine schools but also review the research-based studies. We have included some background information below which highlights the importance of this conversation here in Maine.

Early elementary brains are still building executive function—including working memory, cognitive/mental flexibility, and self-regulation—and children need frequent practice with these skills in real-world contexts. (Harvard University Center on Developing Child (2024) and American Academy of Pediatrics Council on Communications and Media)

Many digital experiences are engineered for immediate, repeated rewards, which can pull children toward quick-gratification patterns and reduce opportunities to practice delayed gratification and sustained effort—core components of executive function. (Harvard University Center on Developing Child (2024) and American Academy of Pediatrics Council on Communications and Media)

Reward pathways matter: dopamine helps reinforce behaviors that produce a reward, which is why highly reinforcing “instant feedback” experiences can be so compelling for developing brains. (Harvard University Center on Developing Child (2024) and American Academy of Pediatrics Council on Communications and Media)

Reading development can be affected by the medium. Research syntheses commonly find a “screen inferiority” effect—on average, students comprehend somewhat better on paper than on screens, especially for deeper understanding. (Harvard Medical School/Digital Wellness Lab Research Syntheses and Harvard Graduate School of Education)

Digital reading often encourages skimming and nonlinear scanning, while print reading more naturally supports slower, linear focus, which can strengthen comprehension routines and sustained attention. (Harvard Medical School/Digital Wellness Lab Research Syntheses and Harvard Graduate School of Education)

Young children are also wiring social-emotional and social-cognitive skills through peer-to-peer interaction—reading facial expressions, body language, tone, and practicing real-time conversation and collaboration. (American Academy of Pediatrics)

AAP guidance emphasizes balance over a single “magic number” of minutes. The AAP notes there isn’t enough evidence to support one universal time limit for all children; instead, families and schools should prioritize the quality of media and protect essentials like sleep, physical activity, and relationships.

AAP also distinguishes “active” vs. “passive” technology use.

- Active use: creation, critical thinking, coding, media production, design, collaboration.
- Passive use: consumption or digital worksheets without reflection/participation.

Technology should not take center stage over hands-on learning, play, and peer interaction—because what children miss (practice, relationships, rich sensory input) is often the bigger developmental cost.

We look forward to MEPRI completing this study. Our hope is that this research will highlight both what is happening in Maine and the brain science studies nationwide to potentially help improve student outcomes, classroom practices, and district policies. We encourage members to support this resolve to better understand the role of technology in schools.