

Hello,

My name is Chris and I live in Bath. I write this testimony in support of LD 2052.

My son entered kindergarten last Fall at our public elementary school and I believe he likes it there. One day by chance a friend told me she was upset about the policy around the Chromebook her seven-year-old daughter had in school. I was very surprised by how young her daughter was to have a personal laptop, so I decided to ask our school about their policy around technology. I was not expecting that 5-year-olds were handling a personal computer when they barely could hold a pencil. I have to say that my school teacher and principal were very responsive and supportive and explained to me that every child in kindergarten uses a wonderful literacy app for 15 minutes a day. We still prefer that our kindergartener focus on papers and books and not be distracted by a laptop, so we opted him out of this.

Something feels wrong to me about the rush to get young children using adult tools. If they have just begun to learn to read, why should they be rushed into logins, navigating sites and applications and printing methods, as if they worked in an office? I could not shake this gut feeling so I have been catching up with negative parental anecdotes around 1:1 devices in schools and voices of various experts warning about serious issues in the current global landscape of education and "edtech". I began to hear and read about lower test scores, increased depression and cyberbullying, data breaches, lawsuits, Finland and Denmark declaring computers in classrooms to have been a mistake, school kids who cannot truly read, A child who committed suicide following ChatGPT advice.

At this point, I am wondering if I must find a private school for my child even though I am a strong supporter of public education. I urge you to consider this: thirty years ago there was a new thing called the internet and it was going to be amazing; it was going to make our lives so wonderful. But now I think we need to take a pause and reconsider, make changes, and maybe take other paths. Yes, there has been a huge amount of wealth and work invested in internet-based applications. But now we need to think of the why's—why are we using educational methods that are creating so many problems and so few benefits for the kids? Have these tools ever been shown to be better than (or as good as) the traditional teaching methods that they are replacing? And if not, why did we invest in them like we did?

I strongly advise you to support LD 2052 as a first step in determining what's happening in Maine's schools.