

**Testimony of Crystal M. Schreck
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
On Behalf of a Statewide Bell-to-Bell Smartphone Ban in Maine Schools**

Good afternoon Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and distinguished members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of a statewide bell-to-bell smartphone ban in Maine's schools.

As a parent and an engaged member of our community, I am here today because of the impact that unrestricted smartphone presence has had on my child's education. My son, diagnosed with ADHD, struggles with sustained attention. In classrooms where phones are accessible, he is pulled away from engagement not just by his own notifications (via his school-issued laptop that funnels his text messages), but by his peers' phones notifications buzzing, opportunities for comparison, social media checking, and off-task engagement. These disruptions fragment his focus and make it exponentially harder for him to engage with instruction, complete assignments, and build confidence in his learning.

Research further underscores what many parents and educators are observing in Maine and across the country: **more than half of public school leaders report that student cell phone use negatively impacts academic performance**, and a majority report negative effects on students' attention spans and mental health as well. ([Institute of Education Sciences](#)) Another study found that students who use smartphones during class show measurable decreases in attention and lower performance on academic tasks compared to peers without phone access.

In classrooms, every minute lost to distraction is a minute not spent on building literacy, math fluency, critical thinking, or social skills. For students who already face challenges with focus and self-regulation, the presence of personal smartphones makes an already steep climb even more difficult.

Many schools in Maine have already adopted stricter phone-free practices with positive results, and other states that have moved to statewide restrictions report improved focus and classroom climate.

Finally, this policy sends a clear message that Maine values learning environments free from avoidable distraction and is willing to support teachers, students, and families in prioritizing education over perpetual digital interruption.

Respectfully,

Crystal Schreck

Turn the Tide Coalition, Maine