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GG This Part directs the Department of Education, in coordination with the Maine School Management Association, to develop a model policy available to school boards prohibiting use of personal electronic devices during the school day.

This proposal is not anti-technology. It is pro-learning, pro-health, and pro-safety. Maine schools already work hard to meet students where they are. But personal phones and smart devices are not neutral tools in a classroom. They are designed to capture attention, interrupt focus, and compete with instruction. When a student's pocket vibrates, learning stops—often for far longer than the moment it takes to glance at a screen. The result is predictable: more distraction, less academic engagement, and more conflict between students and teachers over device use.

A model statewide policy matters because it gives local boards a proven, consistent foundation—especially districts that don't have the staff time or legal resources to draft policies from scratch. A model policy also prevents the “patchwork problem,” where expectations vary widely from one town to the next. Families move between districts. Students participate in regional programs and athletics. Clear, consistent norms reduce confusion and strengthen compliance.

The benefits extend beyond academics.

****First, student well-being.**** A school day without personal devices creates space for healthier social interaction—face-to-face conversation at lunch, authentic connection during group work, and fewer opportunities for social media-driven conflict during the hours students are together. Educators across Maine are already responding to increased anxiety, peer conflict, and attention challenges. A device-free day supports the kind of calm, focused environment students need to thrive.

****Second, school climate and discipline.**** When expectations are clear and consistent, enforcement becomes fairer and simpler. Teachers should not be put in the position of negotiating phone rules class by class, period by period. A model policy can provide common language, reasonable procedures, and due process—so staff can spend their time teaching, not policing screens.

****Third, safety and emergency response.**** In a crisis, confusion and misinformation can spread instantly through personal devices, complicating communication and response efforts. A well-designed policy can ensure that schools maintain reliable, centralized communication protocols—while still allowing appropriate exceptions for medical needs, disability accommodations, and other legitimate circumstances.

Importantly, this bill respects local control. It does not force a one-size-fits-all mandate. It simply provides Maine school boards with a model policy they can adopt, adapt, and implement based on their community's needs. This is a practical, low-cost step that helps districts act faster, more consistently, and with greater confidence.

If you pass this bill, I encourage the model policy to include a few key elements:

- * Clear definitions of “personal electronic device” and “school day”
- * A simple, workable storage procedure (such as lockers, classroom pouches, or secure collection)
- * Limited, clearly defined exceptions (IEPs/504s, medical monitoring, translation needs, emergencies)
- * Consistent consequences that emphasize learning and restoration, not humiliation
- * A communication plan for families so parents can still reach the school when needed

Maine students deserve classrooms where attention is protected, instruction isn't competing with social media, and relationships are built in real life. A model policy will help districts take a reasonable, research-aligned step toward stronger learning

outcomes and healthier school environments.