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LD 2212

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Scarborough, Maine

Support for Bell to Bell, Personal Devices (including Cell Phones) Ban in the
Supplemental Budget

Dear Legislators,

I am writing in support of a bell to bell ban on cell phones as included in the
supplemental budget

As a doctorally prepared nurse practitioner, student of public health and mom of two,
I urge you to pass this bill not just as a matter of education policy, but as a matter of
public health.

We now know that smartphones—and particularly the apps they host—are designed
to be addictive. The same principles that apply to slot machines and other behavioral
addictions are embedded into these devices: variable rewards, infinite scrolling, push
notifications, and social validation loops. These are not neutral tools. They are
products engineered to capture attention and keep users coming back, often to the
detriment of their mental health, focus, and well-being.

And our kids are especially vulnerable.

The adolescent brain is still developing—especially the regions responsible for
impulse control, emotional regulation, and long-term decision-making. Smartphones
take advantage of these developmental windows, often leading to compulsive use,
anxiety, sleep disruption, and social withdrawal. These are not just distractions. They
are health-harming products.

And they don't belong in classrooms.

Some people may feel this is a personal choice, a decision for individual families. But
that argument ignores the collective impact. Just like secondhand smoke once
polluted classrooms and hallways, we are now seeing the effects of “secondhand
screen time.” A phone buzzing in one backpack distracts multiple students. A social
media conflict in the hallway can derail an entire class period. This is a collective
environment, and it requires collective protection.

We've been here before. There was a time—not long ago—when cigarettes were
allowed in schools. Faculty lounges were full of smoke, and students could sneak off
to smoke in bathrooms. We didn't yet fully understand the risks—or we chose to
ignore them. But once we knew better, we acted.

We are at that point again.

The science is clear. The health impacts are real. And the longer we wait, the more
damage we allow.

Bell to bell bans are a bold, necessary step toward creating healthier, more focused,
and more equitable learning environments. It is a step toward protecting not just
students' education, but their long-term health.

I respectfully urge you to pass this budget and help Maine put student well-being first.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to the future of our children.

Sincerely,
Melanie Applegate
Scarborough, Maine