

Thom Partridge  
Scarborough, Scarborough Alliance for Thoughtful Tech  
LD 2212

Written Testimony in Support of Bell-to-Bell Phone-Free Schools (Supplemental Budget)

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of including bell-to-bell cell phone bans in Maine's supplemental budget. This is a necessary step to protect students and ensure a healthy, focused learning environment across the state.

We cannot leave this issue up to individual school districts. While local control is important especially here in Maine, health concerns must take priority. A patchwork of inconsistent policies will only continue to leave many students unprotected and many educators unsupported.

Maine has faced issues like this before. When the health and safety of children are at stake, we do not rely on voluntary or district-by-district decision-making. We have used statewide policy to address major student health concerns—such as concussion protocols, smoking restrictions, and other school safety standards—because consistent protections matter.

To be clear: this is a health issue. Smartphones in schools pose serious risks due to their addictive design—driven by constant notifications, social media feedback loops, and algorithmic content. Exposure to cyberbullying functions as an independent risk factor for depression and suicidality in youth. The product design of social media algorithms exploit children and undermine students' mental, emotional, and physical health.

Unrestricted access during the school day leads to chronic distraction, inability to focus, disrupts learning and sleep patterns, increases anxiety and depression through social comparison, and reduces essential face-to-face social interaction. The compulsive urge to check devices hijacks attention and fosters dependency patterns similar to behavioral addictions. Personal mobile phones and digital products present disciplinary and educational challenges—as well as serious health concerns.

If we're talking about control, let's be honest about who really has it. Whistleblowers and court cases have confirmed that Big Tech designed these devices to be addictive to our kids. Right now, it's Big Tech—not local communities or the state—controlling our classrooms.

This isn't about local versus state control. Our statewide efforts are about keeping Mainers in charge of Maine classrooms. This is keeping control in Maine instead of giving control to Big Tech. Without coordinated statewide action, Maine students lose. This is the same for other states. For states to retain control against Big Tech, they must coordinate statewide action.

I urge you to support bell-to-bell phone-free school policies through the supplemental budget and ensure that all Maine students have the same protections and the same opportunity to learn without digital interference.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thom Partridge, Scarborough, ME