

RE: Support for Bell to Bell Ban

To Sen. Rotundo and Rep. Gattine the esteemed members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee:

I am writing in strong support of LD 2212, Section GG, as it pertains to bell-to-bell limits on phones and personal communication devices during the school day.

Phones did not enter schools because they improved learning or social development. They entered because adoption served powerful commercial interests, and schools were left to manage the consequences. Teachers now compete with devices engineered to capture attention, fragment focus, and generate profit through constant engagement. That is not a fair contest, and children lose.

The evidence is clear. A landmark study by economists Louis-Philippe Beland and Richard Murphy found that schools implementing phone bans saw meaningful improvements in student academic performance, with the strongest gains among students who were already struggling. The effect was comparable to adding instructional time, at virtually no cost. This is one of the rare education policies that is simple, inexpensive, and effective.

Phones also change how children experience school. When devices are present, students disengage from classmates, avoid unstructured interaction, and retreat into private digital worlds during moments that once built social skills. For younger students in particular, those moments matter. Childhood development depends on attention, movement, and direct human interaction. Constant access to personal devices interferes with all three.

Let's call this what it is.

Tech corporations have engineered systems that extract profit from children's attention, anxiety, sleep deprivation, and social comparison. They lobby relentlessly to normalize constant access, because every notification, every scroll, every data point is revenue.

We should not allow classrooms, which are spaces meant for learning, human connection, and growth, to become extensions of that business model.

Bell-to-bell bans work because they are clear and equitable. Partial bans fail. "Backpack policies" fail. When devices remain physically present, cognitive load remains high. Research shows that even a silent phone nearby reduces working memory and task performance.

A recently conducted survey by UPENN including data from over 20,000 teachers nationwide show that bell-to-bell policies are associated with more focused classrooms,

less disruption, and higher teacher satisfaction. Educators are telling us what works. We should listen.

As a parent, I do not want my children to be collateral damage in a race for corporate profit.

I want them to learn how to think deeply, build friendships face-to-face, move their bodies, and experience childhood without constant digital interference.

Protecting children sometimes requires saying no, especially when powerful industries say “trust us.”

A Bell to Bell Ban sets a firm boundary during the school day and restores classrooms as places designed for learning, not monetization. I urge you to support the supplemental budget as it pertains to phone-free schools in Maine.

Respectfully submitted,

Abigail Henry

Scarborough, Maine (Parent of an 8-year-old boy and a 10-year-old boy)

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LD 2212

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