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Testimony of Representative Michael Brennan presenting

LD 643, Resolve, to Study the Effects of Artificial Intelligence, Cellular Telephones and Social Media on Public Education

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Good morning, Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and fellow distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Michael Brennan, and I represent House District 115, which includes a portion of Portland.

Today, I am here to introduce **LD 643, Resolve, to Study the Effects of Artificial Intelligence, Cellular Telephones and Social Media on Public Education**.

This study directs the Department of Education to establish a working group to study and make recommendations regarding the use of artificial intelligence, cellphones and social media within public school settings. The working group is required, no later than December 3, 2025, to submit a report that includes its findings and recommendations to this committee.

This topic is incredibly relevant.

As of September 2024, 15 states have passed laws or enacted policies that ban or restrict students' use of cellphones in schools.¹ Additionally, seven of the nation's 20 largest school districts forbid use of cellphones during the school day.²

We already know that cellphones are a big distraction to students, and we are just now beginning to learn more about the impacts of social media on mental health.

¹ <https://www.edweek.org/technology/which-states-ban-or-restrict-cellphones-in-schools/2024/06>

² <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/take-cellphones-out-classroom-educators-say>

Further, as of 2024 in Maine, more than 30 schools have voted to implement bans or restrictions on the use of cellphones in schools. These types of policies are often implemented to improve student mental health, academic success and classroom focus.

For example, Regional School Unit 1 (RSU 1), which includes Bath, Arrowsic, Woolwich and Phippsburg, banned cellphones and smartwatches during the school day for students in grades 6-12. Drawing from the information we already have from these schools, and from research across the country, we can better determine the impacts of cellphone use in schools before taking any more immediate, state-level action.

As you may have seen in the recent Portland Press Herald article published last Thursday, the Board of Directors for Maine School Administrative District 75 is considering a proposal where student cellphones are secured in a special pouch until the end of the school day. Right now, students are expressing their concerns if they are unable to access cellphones in regards to emergencies and the ability to communicate with their family members throughout the day.

It's important to take all views on this issue into consideration and to further study how we can better help our kids be successful in school.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this study. I am happy to answer any questions.