

Hello, my name is Rhiannon Carpenter, and I live in Freeport Maine. I am a mother of two girls who are quite young and will be in the RSU5 school system. I recently spoke at the RSU5 board meeting and made a public statement. I am also thankful for the opportunity to speak on this issue here today.

Even before our girls were born, we were very intentional about what we exposed them to including limitations of TV, phones, iPads, computers, etc. Even though our girls are barely school age, this is a topic I feel very strongly about. I believe a bell to bell no cell phone policy in school is extremely important to ensure kids can focus solely on their learning and not be distracted.

The evidence for the harm of cell phones and especially social media is empirical and cannot be disputed. While our culture supports ubiquitous cell phone usage, school is not the place.

Well, I understand it might be challenging to create a ban on cell phone phones in school, I feel it is necessary, very similar to other policies and procedures such as: no smoking on campus, no vaping, anti-bullying, anti-discrimination, etc. These policies are in place for the good of the students and their physical and mental health.

I am also mindful of the Surgeon General's recommendation last year in July that *"schools should ensure that classroom learning and social time or phone free experiences."* I think the ownership is not just on policy but also on parents. I am committing to doing the same in my home for as long as humanly possible.

This is a decision that has to be made at the state level. Relying on local control has led to a patchwork of policies—some schools have done something, others have done nothing. There's no consistency, and that means unequal access to learning environments that support focus and academic success.

In communities like Scarborough, school boards are already stretched thin with major priorities like new building projects. Meanwhile, principals are left to implement piecemeal solutions and navigate vocal opposition from parents—many of whom simply haven't had the chance to engage with the full body of research yet.

We can't keep asking individual schools to figure this out on their own. A statewide policy would provide clarity, consistency, and support—ensuring that every student in Maine, no matter where they live, has the same opportunity to learn without unnecessary digital distractions. The evidence is in. It's time to act.