

Thank you, Representatives, for inviting me to testify.

Currently, at my school, there is a separate cell phone practice for middle schoolers and high schoolers. In middle school, you're not supposed to have your phone out at all during the day. In high school, you're not supposed to have your phone out during class, but you can have them during passing time. Teachers are also allowed to request that students put their phones in a "phone pouch"—sort of like a calculator holder on the wall—outside of the classroom. If a teacher sees your phone when you shouldn't have it out, they are supposed to take it away. They can either keep it until the end of class or turn it in to the main office to be picked up at the end of the day. It's supposed to be logged in Alma, which is the platform my school uses to communicate, post grades, etc. A student who has multiple phone incidents (2 for a middle schooler, 3 for a high schooler) is required to do Social Emotional Learning sessions about healthy phone habits.

I think that cell phones distract from school, and students shouldn't have their phones out at school. I think that even allowing them during passing time is a bad idea because it trains students' brains to think about school as a place for phones, without necessarily saying "school is only a place for phones during passing time". Students then likely have a harder time getting off of their phones when they're supposed to.

I think a big problem isn't the choice of: should we ban cell phones? I think a lot of people would say yes. A big problem is enforcing that. I see a lot of kids in school on their phone when they shouldn't be, and teachers definitely let some of it slide. If it's super obvious that a kid is on their phone, sometimes it gets taken away, but teachers, mostly, don't want to be the teacher that gets a reputation for taking phones away. I think a lot of them make the decision that it's better if a few kids aren't paying attention than if several or even many kids don't like them or their class. So I think a big thing is telling teachers that it's important to enforce the rule. If that doesn't work, then I think schools may have to use more intense methods, like locking phones up. I don't think anyone wants that. It's a lot of money and resources and the kids won't like it either.

H.54 also prohibits the use of social media for extracurriculars. I support this. I've had coaches who say things like "We may change practice details during the school day, you'll need to check the app so you know what to do.". This puts pressure on kids to have phones at all. When I started Track, the coach said something along those lines, and I didn't have a phone. I ended up getting a phone earlier than I might have so that I could use the app and know about practice. It's hard to control every aspect of social media that relates to extracurriculars, and kids will still have group chats and that kind of thing that may exclude people who don't have phones. However, I think telling coaches they have to email practice schedules, or use another more accessible method of communication, would be positive.

It is important is that teachers also aren't on their phones. Some teachers may have emergencies, or need their phone, but a lot of teachers just use it to check the time or set timers. Of course, it's convenient, but I think it's frustrating for kids if all the adults are telling them that they can't use their phones while the adults use their phones. If we can't focus on learning with phones, teachers can't focus on teaching with their phones.