

My name is **INSERT NAME** and I have **X** children in the **INSERT SCHOOL DISTRICT**.

I'm here today to support the *full removal* of phone access from children during the school day, for the following important reasons.

- Common Sense Media reports that 97% of kids use phones during school, for an average of 43 minutes (primarily spent on social media, YouTube and gaming). [source](#)
 - And most kids get over 230 notifications per day. [source](#)
 - Teachers cannot compete with an addictive supercomputer in each child's pocket.
 - Given the choice, is a child going to keep their eyes up and listen to a lesson, or are they going to respond to endless notifications vibrating in their pockets from apps that are built to be addictive to children?
 - A recent study proved that the mere *presence* of one's smartphone reduces available cognitive capacity.
- Teens and preteens everywhere are struggling with social media addiction, and that starts and ends w/ access to a smartphone.
 - Teens spend nearly 5 hours a day on social media apps [source](#)
 - And the U.S. Surgeon General put out an [official advisory](#) last year stating very clearly that 3 or more hours per day on social media DOUBLES the risk of poor mental health including depression and anxiety symptoms.
 - A Science Direct study found that each additional hour of screen time directly increases the odds of suicidal behaviors. [source](#)
 - And the CDC reported that last year, 10% of high school students made a suicide attempt. [source](#)
 - Removing our children's access to social media entirely during the school day will improve their mental health outcomes, creating happier children. Children who are unburdened and ready to learn.
- When kids have smartphones at school, they don't have the opportunity to be bored. A neuroscientist who studies kids' brains recently told me that "boredom is the fertilizer for creativity."
 - Forcing our students to sit in boredom, use their imaginations, talk to their fellow students...all help establish important brain connectivity and soft skills that they will use their entire lifetime.
 - In fact, without access to phones, kids will absorb more of their lessons. A recent study showed that students not using their phones during class wrote down 62% more information. [source](#)
- Kids with smartphones are using them to cheat.
 - 35% of teens admit using their cellphone to cheat in school. [source](#)
 - With easy access now to free AI tools like ChatGPT, cheating will get harder and harder to identify if we don't remove the source.
- Kids are using smartphones to cyberbully both students and teachers.
 - You probably read the recent news out of Pennsylvania where a group of middle school students created fake TikTok accounts of their teachers and posted racist, homophobic and sexually explicit language.

- Bullying these days is quiet. It's anonymous. It's happening on social media during the school day causing extreme distress in students.
- Schools that enacted smartphone bans have experienced a 45% reduction in bullying. [source](#)
- And when kids are allowed smartphones at school, they are accessing inappropriate content, like pornography.
 - 1/3 of all teens reported that they have been exposed to pornography during the school day. [source](#)

For these reasons and many more, I encourage the school board to implement a complete bell-to-bell phone ban at all schools in the district.

- This will result in:
 - Less distractions
 - Less cyberbullying
 - Fewer fights and drama
 - Increased engagement
 - Improved academic outcomes
 - Less cheating
 - Less stress
 - Improved teacher morale and retention
 - Teachers are tired of being the phone police. We can't leave it up to them to enforce.
 - That is why schools are most successful when they lock up phones in pouches or containers that are inaccessible from bell to bell, but can still be kept physically with the student all day long.
 - One company that many schools are using is called Yondr. Yondr offers resources to schools and implementation support, I can provide a link after this meeting.
 - Other schools are using phone lockers located in the main office which are monitored by staff.
 - Consequences if the phone is found on the students' person needs to be strict in order for the policy to be effective.
 - In addition to phones, the policy must include airpods, earbuds and smart watches, with medical exceptions.

Many of the stats I'm sharing are related to teens and high school students, simply because it's easier to do studies on kids at these ages. But the problems persist in the lower grades.

- In fact, younger children are at a more sensitive time in their brain development, and several studies have found that exposure to screens at younger ages causes decreased gray matter and tissue loss in children's brains.
- With these policies, we have to begin in elementary school and continue through 12th grade.

A bell to bell phone free policy provides students with 7-8 hours each school day to be fully present and free from the pressures and harms of phones and social media. It's an investment into the health of our children.

I am aware that pushback on phone policies is often coming from parents who want to get ahold of their children during the school day.

- Though schools who have implemented bell-to-bell phone bans have reported both parents and students have been overwhelmingly supportive, especially when communication of the benefits is made clear through the entire process.

As a parent, I would love to assist in implementation through communicating the benefits to parents to ensure buy-in.

- This will only be successful if parents, teachers and administrators all come together in support of a policy that best prepares these children to lead happy, successful, and productive lives.
- And for that, we need to remove phones; give them the opportunity to focus on their studies, on connecting with peers and on connecting with themselves.

Thank you for prioritizing this important conversation, and I look forward to positive changes regarding our district mandated phone policies.