

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Public Education
For HB 1481

Compiled on: Wednesday, March 19, 2025 12:33 AM

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Hearing Date: March 18, 2025 8:00 AM

Bethany Tillman
Self
Wylie, TX
I oppose HB3

Emily Lee
DeKalb ISD
New Boston, TX

Due to cell phone expenses and secure storage that would need to be purchased, schools will need additional funds would be available for schools to potentially comply with this new requirement. At our school, this would cost 2-3 thousand dollars which we do not have available with present funding.

Midge Epstein
NA
CorpusChristi, TX

Representative Farley, is submitting substitute language to his bill, which will do the following:

Prohibits phone use throughout the entire school day, with local school districts determining after-school policies.
Requires school districts to adopt disciplinary measures for non-compliance while maintaining local control over enforcement.
Provides exemptions for students requiring communication devices for an IEP, 504 plan, or medical necessity.
Clarifies that school-issued devices are not included in the ban.
Directs TEA to establish model policy language for school districts.

I urge you to support this bill for the education and wellbeing of students.

Jon Turnipseed, Mr.
self
Bluff Dale, TX

As a License Counselor since the 90s, I have witnessed the negative impact cell phones and video games have inflicted on our youths. It would take more than 3000 characters to describe the negative impact I have seen over the years.

Charissa Shuttlesworth

Self

Austin, TX

I strongly support adopting HB 1481. As a parent of three children, I have grown increasingly concerned about curbing the amount of time students spend on their devices throughout the school day. Studies have shown that increased smart device usage in kids has led to increased rates of depression, suicidal ideation, anxiety, not to mention an inability to focus for more than a few minutes. I long for a school day where my kids can focus on their lessons and socializing in real time with their peers. Every kid deserves this. And teachers need adequate and meaningful support to enforce rules that are often already in place. By making this a statewide law, it levels the playing field for all kids and teachers and introduces a new norm that will benefit everyone involved.

Please do the right thing and pass this bill.

Ronald Kotts

Self ALief Texas State Teachers Association

HOUSTON, TX

This bill must pass. Cell phones are a huge distraction in the classroom. This bill is worthless if you do not force local school boards to assign some form of student behavior modifications/consequences for repeated student violations.

Janell Moyes

self

Austin, TX

Vote NO on HB1481. This bill does not allow for the very real needs of students to use personal wireless communication devices in class: for medical monitoring and as an accommodation for a learning disability in written expression (e.g. digital recorder for note taking, voice to text for answering written questions).

MaryAnn Jackson, Mrs.

Self/ Retired

Cypress, TX

The biggest problem with learning for children is the one-one devices (laptops) and iPads issued to the students by the schools! Stop passing bills that force the young to be on technology for hours in a day like HB1605!! Stop the government devices and let the parents be responsible for their children's phones. Teachers know how to monitor the phones during their class instruction! It is the same way if the children had a magazine or book out during a lesson!

Take the one-one-devices away and save tax dollars!!

Monica Dean

Myself

Houston, TX

I am against this bill because I believe the parents have a right to have a connection with their child on a device they purchased. While I do agree that cell phones should be put away during instruction time, I believe the Independent School Districts should make their own policies that reflect their community values. The more pressing issue is the 1:1 Chromebook devices. These devices not only are creating huge learning losses as seen during and after Covid but they also have harmful health effects that must be addressed. This is an extensive list but not an exhaustive one.

Sleep deprivation

- Low energy
- ADHD
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Increased stress
- Addiction
- Aggression and impulsivity
- Obesity
- Type 2 diabetes
- Developmental issues (especially in young kids)
- Dry-eye disease
- Decreased hand-eye coordination
- Reduced ability to form social connections and relationships
- Reduced executive function
- EMF overexposure

The EMF exposure needs to be looked at carefully especially in mine, Cypress Fairbanks, the third largest district in Tx. We have an overwhelming amount of hotspots and WiFi radiating throughout the classroom and buildings all day. What detrimental effects is this having on our students, teachers and staff? We must investigate and be proactive. Please seriously consider addressing the true cause of learning loss, the government issued tech devices not the parental ones.

David Kossey

amending my previous submission slightly.

Stinnett, TX

Request 1 of 2.

I request that the committee retain my prior submission in its entirety but make the following changes to my statement: remove 'powered off' and replace it with 'silent, with no sound, vibration, or illuminated screens,' ensuring devices cannot be actively used but do not require full shutdown.

Revised subsection (c):

"Policies adopted under Subsection (b) must require that personal devices remain completely silent, producing no sound or movement, with no illuminated screens, and stored out of sight in a student's personal bag or backpack during instructional time. Schools shall not be liable for the loss, theft, or damage of such devices. Schools shall notify parents annually of the policy and provide an alternative communication method (e.g., office phone) for urgent contact during instructional time. Districts shall establish guidelines discouraging non-emergency parental contact via student devices during instructional time."

The change ensures that devices remain non-disruptive during instructional time while allowing them to remain operational for safety reasons. Requiring devices to be fully powered off could cause delays in emergency situations where quick communication is critical. By allowing devices to stay on but fully silent with no sound, vibration, or screen illumination, students can comply with the policy without compromising timely access in urgent situations.

Request 2 of 2.

I request that the committee add a definition for 'instructional time' to clarify enforcement. Insert 'instructional time' as meaning 'the period between the official start and end times of a scheduled class, as determined by the school's bell schedule, regardless of whether direct instruction is occurring.'

Revision to Subsection (a):

(a) In this section:

1. "Personal device" means any item with electronic components, not school-provided, capable of distracting from instruction. This includes cellular telephones, smartwatches, earbuds, gaming devices, and any current or future technology with similar functions; other items are exempt.
2. "Instructional time" means the period between the official start and end times of a scheduled class, as determined by the school's bell schedule, regardless of whether direct instruction is occurring.

This change prevents loopholes where students or teachers might argue that phone use is allowed during non-instructional moments within a class period. By defining instructional time as the full duration of a scheduled class, from bell to bell, the policy ensures consistent enforcement and eliminates ambiguity about when the rule applies.

Thank you.

David Kossey

Self, previous educator of 7 years, spouse of 17+ year educator, HD87 resident against HB3

Stinnett, TX

We NEED this law passed. Schools need help with parents (or lack of) too. Kids can't focus with tech buzzing all day long. Schools shouldn't be stuck paying for lost or broken phones, that's crazy. Phones in bags, simple, stops old fake phone in bin tricks, no bins, no hassle for staff. Old definition was too narrow, it missed a lot. Tech's fast, smartwatches, smart glasses, earbuds, vapes you name it. I made it any electronic item, not school-approved, that can distract from class. Non electronics out, so teachers can't grab random crap like pencils/books. No slick kid loopholes, no control-freak teacher overreach. Enforcement's gotta bite, no consequences, no one cares. Discipline ties keep it real. Emergencies, IEPs stay covered, safety first. Parents get a heads-up and a school phone line. Training, TEA reports force schools to act. Real fix is bigger, removing parents texting nonstop, and kids hooked deep on screens need real tech addiction education from schools.

Sec. 38.0232. PERSONAL DEVICE USE BY STUDENTS PROHIBITED, RESPONSIBLE USE.

(a) In this section, "personal device" means any item with electronic components, not school-provided, capable of distracting from instruction. This includes cellular telephones, smartwatches, earbuds, gaming devices, and any current or future technology with similar functions; other items are exempt.

(b) Notwithstanding Section 38.0231, the board of trustees of a school district and the governing body of an open-enrollment charter school shall adopt policies prohibiting students from using personal devices during instructional time. Policies may permit limited, supervised use of personal devices for instructional purposes at teacher discretion and shall allow device use in emergencies, as defined by the school district, or for students with documented educational needs under an individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 plan.

(c) Policies adopted under Subsection (b) must require that personal devices remain powered off, if applicable, and stored out of sight in a student's personal bag or backpack during instructional time. Schools shall not be liable for the loss, theft, or damage of such devices. Schools shall notify parents annually of the policy and provide an alternative communication method (e.g., office phone) for urgent contact during instructional time. Districts shall establish guidelines discouraging non-emergency parental contact via student devices during instructional time.

(d) School districts shall provide annual training for staff on policy enforcement and report compliance data to the Texas Education Agency. Staff who fail to enforce policies under this section may be subject to disciplinary action as determined by the school district or charter school governing body, consistent with existing personnel policies.

(e) Districts shall integrate age-appropriate digital citizenship and tech addiction awareness into the curriculum to educate students on responsible technology use.

Jessica Hanson

self-Mother and Public Educator

AZLE, TX

I fully support HB 1481 as a public educator, however as a parent of Type 1 Diabetic child, I would like to see a disclaimer statement added that allows for students with medical disabilities that require electronic devices to be allowed reasonable accommodations for using such devices for medical needs. For example, my child 12 year old who is diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes, she uses her cell phone as a continuous glucose monitor as well as an insulin pump to dose for carbohydrates during the school day. Access to her device is needed in order to maintain her safety in school. I would like to see verbiage added for accommodations allowed if a student needs a cell phone as a medical device.

Carolyn Love, Mrs.

Hurst Euless Bedford ISD

North Richland Hills, TX

Schools of Choice/giving vouchers to parents will damage Texas schools and base funding for schools on student enrollment, not attendance.

Gary Zimmerman, Firearms Instructor

Self

Fort Worth, TX

I am in full support of this bill, and wish this bill to be passed. However my concerns with the bill are for those schools that wish the students to use devices provided by the student such as a tablet or laptop for the purpose of instruction. The bill allows the school to provide those items and the the student to use them during instructional time, but only they are provided by the school. So,e schools may not have the funds to provide those devices and ask the students to do so. We should provide an exclusion, but only if the school system requires those devices to be provided by the school

Rebekah Dykhuis

Self

Austin, TX

I am a retired teacher and creating vouchers will only make getting a good education worse. This bill will only bankrupt the already struggling public schools. This bill obviously favors the wealthy and will only hurt the lower income people. I strongly disagree with the voucher program.

Natalie Brown

Teach Plus Texas

Forney, TX

Teach Plus Texas appreciates the opportunity to provide written testimony in favor of HB 1481. We firmly support this initiative and wish to highlight its significance. During the Summer of 2024, Teach Plus Texas, in partnership with the East Dallas ISD Vertical Team, conducted research regarding the presence and use of cell phones by students throughout the school day. The purpose of the research was to look for ways to curb its effects and its challenges to student learning. Over a thousand participants, including parents, teachers and other stakeholders were surveyed. As a result we found that over 75% of parents and over 95% of teachers believe that cell phone use by students during the school day negatively affects student achievement and engagement during instructional time. Issues like distractions, interruptions and even negative effects to the brain and the socio-emotional growth of the students (including cyber bullying) were at the top of the list of concerns for the majority of participants. HB 1481 will transform the student and teacher experience within the classroom. Benefits of HB 1481 (quotes from participants in our research): Student Engagement in the Classroom: “Children should be free from distractions and online social pressures during school. They should focus on learning and their teachers.” (Parent)

Teacher and Student Relationship: “Removing cellphones fosters better interaction between students and teachers. Students are more likely to participate in discussions, ask questions, and collaborate with peers, enhancing the overall learning experience.” (Teacher) Student Academic and Social Development: “Cell phone use, especially for students with ADHD like my child, is a constant distraction and temptation that negatively interferes with comprehension, behavior in the classroom, and social interactions.” (Parent) Effective implementation of HB 1481 is crucial to ensuring that school policies not only address the issue but also support parents and teachers. Another of our findings was that there is a divide between parents of high school students and elementary and middle school parents in the way they feel about prohibiting the access of wireless communication devices during school time. While a strong majority of elementary and middle school parents (over 70%) support such an initiative, less than 50% of high school parents support it. The majority of the hesitation and opposition comes from the lack of understanding about the implementation and lack of trust of the process. To maximize the impact and support of HB 1481, we recommend a transparent process that includes district leaders, parents, teachers and other stakeholders in the process of developing those policies. District should establish mechanisms to regularly assess the effectiveness of the policies, allowing for adjustments and improvements based on empirical evidence. HB 1481 is a step in the right direction of improving student engagement.

Anne NEWMAN

self

Boerne, TX

I am concerned about the ability of students to use their phones in an emergency. Please consider a way that prevents students from using phone during instructional time but would allow their use in an emergency. For example, allow teachers to confiscate students who use their phone during instructional time, except for an emergency, and allow teachers to discipline students who do so. Bullying needs to be dealt with as a separate issue. Schools have allowed it for years. Enforce discipline when bullying occurs. Perhaps they should have to write a research paper on bullying or go to alternative school. Certainly parents should be informed. And students should be aware of a way to report bullying and know they would be protected.

Rachel Hale

myself / Texas Education 911

Henderson, TX

I am testifying on the bill. The cell phones are absolutely a problem, however, I am not in favor of students having parent issued cell phones taken up. Currently my local school district has had a cell phone policy in place for at least 10 years. If the cell phone is out & the teacher takes it up you pay a fine to get it back etc. The problem is the district has abandoned the policy & does not enforce it or they pick & choose which student they will enforce it with. As a parent advocate we have seen districts plant marijuana vape pen on a student that would not have been known unless the child had it recorded (Corpus Christi ISD, AP was arrested). A teacher was being sexually harassed by another employee & the district lied & said they knew nothing about it, yet the AP scolded the victim & said I thought that was over & handled which was recorded. Phones have been a distraction because districts aren't enforcing local policy. There are a million examples of horrific things happening in public ed, is this bill designed to stop the negative social media & news articles we see daily of events happening at school? This seems to be a band aid to solve a much bigger problem. Social emotional learning is causing the rise in mental health issues, using restorative discipline & circle time rather than actually disciplining students, cyber bullying sadly can still occur after school hours, and the rise in uncertified teachers who may be lacking classroom management are plaguing the academic decline & safety issues we are seeing in K-12 public education. We can legislate ourselves to death, please leave this as a local control issue.

Jamie Haynes

Texans WakeUp

Canyon, TX

There are several reasons why prohibiting minors from using cell phones during school hours could be considered beneficial:

1. Improved Focus and Learning: Cell phones can be a major distraction. Without them, students may pay more attention to lessons, participate more actively in class, and retain more information.
2. Reduced Cheating: Phones make it easier for students to cheat during exams or share answers. Banning them reduces this risk and helps maintain academic integrity.
3. Better Social Interaction: Without phones, students are more likely to engage face-to-face with peers, building stronger social skills and relationships.
4. Less Cyberbullying During School Hours: Cell phones can be a tool for bullying through social media or messaging. Limiting their use reduces the chances of this happening while students are at school.
5. Encourages Healthy Boundaries: By separating school time from personal phone use, students may develop better habits around screen time and learn to balance responsibilities.
6. Promotes Equality: Not all students can afford the latest smartphones. Limiting their use in school can reduce feelings of exclusion or inequality based on what device someone has.
7. Protects Minors From Explicit Materials: By having students off of their phones and focused on education, we are reducing the amount of time thus probability that they would encounter sexually explicit or obscene material on their devices.

By allowing the devices to still be available in the classroom in case of emergency, gives parents peace of mind.

We applaud Representative Fairly for authoring this bill and as the members to vote FOR HB 1481 to protect children!

Brian Bloss
Self, teacher
Grapevine, TX

Brian Bloss
Teacher/Self
On

To the committee, I believe this bill is with the best of intentions but there are some important revisions that would be nice to see as a teacher. Currently as written the legislation puts too much focus on the teacher to enforce and I feel like the technology provision targeted may be out of date.

- 1) Please revise the legislation to read that any electronic device not provided by the district. Please have this include cell phones, smart watches, smart glasses, portable game consoles, and any other device that in the future would serve a similar function.
- 2) Please write in an exemption for our students with health impairments that may need an electronic monitor.
- 3) Please rework that the expectation would be from the starting bell of an academic period (or if you even wish to make it from the starting bell of the academic school day until the closing bell of academic time) that the expectations that any such devices are to remain powered off, and out of sight in a students backpack or other storage area such as a locker.

By placing the emphasis on the student rather than the teacher this helps to preserve the teacher student relationship and it takes less focus on the teacher to police cell phones and other devices rather than focusing on academic success. I have taught at both the high school and middle school levels and when there is no teeth to such rules and it is up to the teachers then it takes a lot of energy away from the teaching aspect.

Thank you for considering this. If there is teeth that does not fall on the teachers to be the primary enforcer then this sounds like a good idea in practice.

Benjamin Swanson
Year
Fort Worth, TX

Students do not need the use of phones during school time. We are already lacking in reading, writing and mathematics. Phones cause a significant problem when use during instructional time. A state wide mandate is needed to clean up this mishap

Leah Nichols
Self, Licensed Master Social Worker
Midlothian, TX

The internet, social media, phone usage in general is extremely harmful to children and has been shows in many studies over the last 20 years. The rise in adolescent suicidal ideation and suicide attempts, depression, and anxiety is just scratching the surface. I am a social worker in the Emergency Department at a trauma one Children's hospital and have personally seen the influx of children entering the hospital system with mental health concerns, intentional ingestions, injuries from bullying and physical assaults, trafficking victims, etc. These are a direct result of exposure to adults online, online hate and bullying, pornography, etc. The internet on handheld devices for children has created a CULTURAL AUTISM in children that should be absolutely appalling to every legislator, parent, child educator. The LEAST we can do for children is fully ban phone usage in schools to get them interacting with each other again like normal human beings were meant to do. Please consider a full ban of phone usage in schools. This would significantly change the outcomes for these kids. Exceptions can be made for children with diabetes, etc. Thank you.

Rachel Preston
Self/Teacher
Austin, TX

I would like this bill to state explicitly that if a personal communication device such as a cell phone that there be a provision that a district can permit usage for educational purposes. Students sometimes submit work for classes by uploading images of work done on paper, rather than turning in the paper itself. Provisions for educational use are important.

Linda Litzinger
Texas Parent to Parent - Advocacy and Policy Director
Austin, TX

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comment. Texas Parent to Parent is a statewide nonprofit serving children with every type of disability. We have 15,000 families. Please make room for the child with special healthcare needs who is using their phone or watch/phone to keep data on a medical aspect in their body. Students who use wheelchairs cannot always turn towards the elevator panel if it gets stuck, and need to use their cell phones. Also, for the student who dictates their exams to voice dictation and is placed alone in a room to dictate their exam. My daughter couldn't leave because the door was closed and the staff forgot about her. She couldn't get her wheelchair through a closed door so it was her electronics that allowed her to make the school bus. Please leave ways for the school to accommodate their students with physical needs. Thank you,.

Bryan Allen
self; public educator
Clyde, TX

I strongly support this bill.

Lisa Healy
Self
Midlothian, TX

Please pass this bill out of committee.

Virginia Godfrey
Self
Arlington, TX

Vote against school vouchers and for raising pay for public school teachers!

Bill Avera, Chief
Texas School District Police Chiefs' Association
JACKSONVILLE, TX

While this Bill is well intentioned, we are concerned about a "total" ban on cellphones. Definitely a great concept but basically unenforceable. We know from experience that today's parents are not willing to be unable to communicate with their children, especially in the event of an emergency.

A better approach might be to enact a total ban during instructional time.

Mary Gant
Self/homemaker
Allen, TX

As a conservative Texas Republican I am against this bill. I am for bringing discipline back to the classroom and responsible cell phone usage but I do not believe in restricting local control of the ISDs and cutting off the line of communication between the students and parents. Cell phones can also be used to prevent teachers from teaching inappropriate messages for fear of being recorded.

While the state is advocating to remove the students' personal device our Texas kids are placed 1:1 on school devices. Students can access a plethora of websites and apps through these computers/tablets despite the protective measures taken by the schools. Parents are unable to effectively monitor their children on the school devices and have a much harder time reviewing their student's school instruction. Math and reading scores are down and screen time is up. Eliminating cell phones while at the same time having our kids learn on devices accomplishes nothing but exposing them to more technology and removing parents further. Please consider legislation restricting all technology in the classroom instead.

Yulissa Chavez

The Coalition of Texans with Disabilities

Austin, TX

My name is Yulissa Chavez and I am here to represent the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD). CTD works to ensure that persons with disabilities may work, live, learn, play and participate fully in the community of their choice. CTD is testifying on this bill with a request to allow students with disabilities to have their personal wireless devices.

The bill as it stands introduces valuable measures to enhance focus and minimize distractions in educational settings. It mandates that local school boards and charter schools adopt policies prohibiting the use of such devices, aligning with the goal of preserving instructional integrity. However, we need to protect students with disabilities. For some students, personal wireless communication devices are not merely tools for communication and data reception but critical aids that support their learning and participation in the classroom environment. For instance, these devices can host applications that assist with speech, vision, hearing, and cognitive support, thus enabling active engagement in educational activities. Therefore, we suggest an amendment to Section 38.0232 to include a clause that allows for reasonable accommodations. This would enable students with documented needs, verified by appropriate educational or medical professionals, to retain controlled access to their devices. It would affirm the inclusivity principle, recognizing the diverse requirements of our student population.

We propose the following: the provisions of this ban are not applicable to a student who either:

(1) has an Individualized Education Program, Individualized Accommodation Plan, Section 504 Plan, Individualized Health Plan, Personal Care Services Plan, or Seizure Action Plan that requires the student(s) use of, or immediate access to, a wireless electronic telecommunication device; or (2) has a medical or health condition that requires the student's use of, or immediate access to, a wireless electronic telecommunication device, as prescribed by a physician or physician assistant who is duly licensed to practice in this state.

Incorporating this provision would not undermine the bill's intention but rather fortify it by ensuring equitable learning opportunities for all students. Thank you.

Kelly Rasti

Texas Association of School Boards

AUSTIN, TX

Chair Buckley, Vice Chair Bernal, and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB), thank you for your commitment to ensuring every Texas student has access to a high-quality education.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on House Bill 1481 by Rep. Fairly, relating to the use of personal wireless communication devices by students during instructional time. TASB is supportive of the intent of HB 1482, which is to establish a framework for school districts to prohibit a student's possession and use of a personal wireless communication device.

We are extremely appreciative of Rep. Fairly for working with TASB staff regarding this important legislation. HB 1481 is following the lead of many school districts across the state that have already implemented some type of restriction on students' use of wireless communication devices. Additionally, over a dozen states have enacted laws or policies that ban or restrict students' use of phones in schools and, according to the U.S. Department of Education, 76% of public school prohibited phones for non-academic use in the 2021-2022 school year.

Policymakers have noted the connection between student cell phone use and declining academic performance, as well as the mental health challenges ensuing from students who have constant access to their wireless devices. Based on state and national trends it is clear that now is the time for Texas to establish policy in this area.

While TASB is supportive of the guardrails needed to restrict students' use of personal communication devices, we would stress the need to provide flexibility for school districts to establish policies that best meet the financial, logistical, and local needs of their communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 1481. We look forward to working with Rep. Fairly and the committee to further refine the bill, ensuring that local control is maintained and resources needed to successfully implement the provisions are provided.

Tammy Baker

Self

Corsicana, TX

I am writing to provide my support for this Bill. Please Vote Yes for this Bill.

Lennea Hartoonian

Self

Frisco, TX

This is something each independent district should have the opportunity to set the boundaries for. The state has no right to interfere with such matters. There are so many Apps used in many classroom settings. It will be impossible to oversee them all. Who is going to actually police this and makes no sense whatsoever. Let the local districts establish their own rules regarding cell phone devices in the classroom. Local control must be maintained.

Ayaan Moledina

Self, student

Austin, TX

Good morning. My name is Ayaan Moledina and I am a 15-year-old high school student here in Austin. Today's children and teens spend less time engaging with friends and family in person compared to previous generations. Instead, many rely on social media for interaction, which can still leave them feeling disconnected.

On average, individuals spend 145 minutes per day on social media platforms. 39% of social media users say they are addicted to it. More than 200 school districts have sued major social media companies, holding them accountable for their role in the worsening youth mental health crisis. The lawsuits argue that these companies deliberately created highly addictive platforms that harm mental well-being and specifically targeted young users, who are especially susceptible.

HB 1481 addresses the social and emotional impact of smartphone use in schools. Many instances of cyberbullying occur during school hours through texting, social media, and other online platforms. I see my peers all the time do the craziest, weirdest, and meanest things using social media and their phones at school. It not only hurts mental health but it costs us countless lives. Part of my advocacy involves speaking with parents across the country who have lost their children to suicide and they always tell me that cyberbullying played a role in it and more often than not, the cyberbullying either occurred on school grounds or the content was created on campus. My personal mental health struggles with suicidal ideation and Clinical Depression drive my work, knowing that social media and phone usage plays an important role in these struggles and we need to make all young people aware of that.

Students will, at the discretion of the district, still have access to their phones before and after school, during breaks including lunch and recess, and in emergency situations. HB 1481 strikes a balance between reducing distractions and ensuring students can use technology when it serves a meaningful purpose.

HB 1481 is not about banning technology but about using it wisely and ensuring that classrooms remain spaces for learning, collaboration, and growth. By supporting this legislation, Texas is prioritizing the quality of education and the success of its students in an increasingly digital world.

Liana Vincent
self/TechSafeTexas
Bryan, TX

Research:

“Hours spent on social media and Internet use were more strongly associated with self-harm behaviors, depressive symptoms, low life satisfaction, and low self-esteem than hours spent on electronic gaming and TV watching. Girls generally demonstrated stronger associations between screen media time and mental health indicators than boys (e.g., heavy Internet users were 166% more likely to have clinically relevant levels of depressive symptoms than low users among girls, compared to 75% more likely among boys)” (Twenge & Farley, 2021).

According to Janice in 2023: “US youngsters aged 13 to 16 spend an average of 3.5 hours a day on social media, the advisory said...the report warned that long hours on social media doubled the risk of mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. In early adolescence, when identities and sense of self-worth are forming, brain development is especially susceptible to social pressures, peer opinions, and peer comparison,” it said. Frequent social media use may be associated with distinct changes in the developing brain in the amygdala (important for emotional learning and behavior) and the prefrontal cortex (important for impulse control, emotional regulation...)”(Janice, 2023).

“Excessive smartphone use can lead to neurological changes where the brain of the affected individual has been found to have significantly higher levels of GABA, which results in poorer attention and control as well as being more easily distracted (Hong et al., 2012). “The high accessibility to the rapid flow of information from adolescents’ smartphones can reduce their attention spans as well (Kim et al., 2016). Adolescents can become more dependent on instant rewards associated with smartphones as opposed to natural and/or delayed rewards that come from interactions with friends and family members, or their hobbies (Chen, Liang, Mai, Zhong, & Qu, 2016; Kim et al., 2019). The connectivity in parts of the brain that regulate emotions, decision-making, inhibition, and impulsive control may also be affected by excessive smartphone use” (Chen et al., 2016).

“The findings from 154,981 adolescents in 29 countries showed that consistent across countries, problematic social media use, indicated by symptoms of addiction to social media, was associated with lower mental, school, and social well-being” (Boer et al., 2020).

“In a study of 6595 adolescents (aged 12-15 years) were studied. In unadjusted analyses, spending more than 30 minutes of time on social media, compared with no use, was associated with increased risk of internalizing problems” (Riehm et al., 2019).

Timeline of smartphones:

2007-First iPhone
2008-First Android smartphone
2009-Twitter adds retweet
2009-Facebook launches “like” button

Nicole Brown, Mrs.
Self, Licensed Clinical Social Worker
Houston, TX

As a mental health therapist for youth and mother of six children 18 and under I witness first hand the negative impacts of cell phone use, in particular during the school day. The impacts are widespread: distraction, cyber bullying, cheating, social isolation and enabling addiction. The evidence is overwhelmingly clear that cell phone use dramatically decreases academic performance and increases distraction from the very purpose of education. We are doing a disservice to our youth when we enable unhealthy and destructive influences within their learning environment. By banning cell phone use during the school day we are removing obvious barriers to academic learning and social emotional development. States across the country have engaged bipartisan support, passed legislation and have seen immediate benefits. I applaud you Texas legislators for protecting and prioritizing the youth of Texas!

Shandie Mackay
Self
Houston, TX

I am encouraging our legislators to make this happen this legislative session!

Cecilia Thomas

Self

Humble, TX

I'm agree that the kids don't need phone at school

MacKenzie Ellis

Self

Amarillo, TX

Today I am writing in favor FOR HB 1481.

I've worked within a school district for 9 years and over this period of time I have been able to see firsthand students being allowed cellphones from their parents at younger and younger ages, and quite frankly their little brains aren't able to prioritize school and in person interactions over their devices. Students having such easy access to their personal devices such as cellphones while in an instructional environment creates a multitude of issues. The obvious one is seeing its impact on academics (which I will detail below), but also creates a lot of social problems such as contributing to peer conflict, violence (pulling phones out to record fights), and ultimately being the catalyst to so much drama and bullying. Drama not only from peer to peer, but even from the parents to the school. I've seen situations play out where a student texts their parent about a peer issue before they even bring it to a staff members attention, and then a parent shows up to the school up in arms yelling about why the school hasn't handled an issue. However, the problem is, in situations such as this we are robbing our youth of the opportunity to learn and utilize life skills such as self advocacy. Not to mention, schools can't even help address these concerns with a student directly if they don't even know about it.

Regardless of my personal opinion on this matter, why I am ultimately FOR HB 1481 is because of a study done referred to as The Brain Drain study. (<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/691462>) This study shows "the mere presence of one's smartphone adversely affects two domain-general measures of cognitive capacity—available working memory capacity (WMC) and functional fluid intelligence (Gf)—even when participants are not using their phones and do not report thinking about them."

I can understand the rebuttal to this bill being that students need their phones for extra curriculums and in case of an emergency (ie., school shootings). Students should absolutely be allowed their phones for extra curricular activities, but how I understand this bill is it addresses device use only during instructional time. As for safety reasons, as a parents I 100% understand the desire to try and get ahold of your child during the time of a tragedy. However, as someone who serves on our school district's safety team I can tell you the LAST thing you want during a tragedy is hundreds or thousands of adolescents on their phones. That would actually make our schools more unsafe in those times of crisis. If needing the ability to call 911 becomes the biggest issue with this bill I'd recommend writing into it that each instructional room and/or staff member have access to a phone.

The junior high school campus I work at started a zero phone policy during the instructional day, and I 100% believe it had made a positive impact on our campus and school culture.

Please vote in favor FOR HB 1481.

Thank you

Christina Ross

Media Specialist in Humble ISD

Houston, TX

The use of wireless phones are directly impacting the dynamic of the classroom. Students are disengaged & distracted. Furthermore students are lacking social and emotional skills to cope with loneliness and isolation due to a disconnection with the real world.

Rachael Wharton

Self

Houston, TX

I am in favor of this for the well being of our teenagers. I wish I hadn't given my kids a phone so early. It is consuming their lives and not allowing them to think for themselves.

Jennie Larsen

Self

Houston, TX

I'm in favor banning phones during instructional time. I believe they are a distraction to the students using them inappropriately as well as to students nearby, and they also create too many options for foul play. The time students have in class is valuable and brief, and even if the students say they're using their phones for study purposes, they will inevitably be distracted by other notifications. Banning private devices will improve focus and increase learning in our schools. Out of respect for the teachers and a desire for our students to reach their greatest potential, I hope you'll vote to ban personal devices during instructional time! Thank you for your time!

Lisa Hartzheim

Self

Humble, TX

I am in favor of this bill regulating phone usage. Many kids do not have the funding to purchase a phone and yet all of their classes require a device but do not provide one for them. Not having the kids have phone privileges during classes would allow teachers and children to develop better personal communication skills. Children desperately need less screen time and more interaction and communication one on one with their peers without a phone being the focus. I believe children would feel safer not worrying about every move being recorded or videoed. I am in favor of this bill and the desire to help limit the dependence on phones and having children use them as their crutch in learning and in communicating with others.

MADELINE STEUBING

MYSELF

DEVINE, TX

As a teacher, I found cell phones to be distracting. Districts and teachers are free enforce policies. I have worked with teachers who do not implement district rules and regulations on cell phones, and nothing was enforced. How does the state plan to do this, when they are not in the class rooms daily?

Cell phones are a minimal distraction compared to the 1-1 devices in classrooms. Students can easily share documents, email, message to cheat. At least with a cell phone, I would know they were out of place when they were oddly staring at their crotch. Computers are the burden. Students are burnt out of online work. Teachers are burnt out of online learning, data collection and desegregation. Computers have made learning impressionable for both the teacher and the students.

This bill is another example of government over reach in education, where districts should have the control. Why are there so many curriculums that require online assessments and the STAAR test is online. Screens decrease long term memory stores and academic retention. Cell phones connect kids to parents and this bill wants to eliminate that connection, but are okay with chrome books that link our students with big data government tracking their every move and selling their data? I saw greater academic progress without cell phones in the classroom, as well as computer labs vs 1-1 devices. Teachers and Districts can make those policies.

Krista Kuhn

Self

Austin, TX

As a mother of 3 as well as an SLP, I've seen the impact of cell phones within the school setting. My kids' classmates frequently text during the day or hide in the bathroom to use their phones. Even if cell phones are in backpacks, kids are always "somewhere else." As a Speech Language Pathologist, I am deeply concerned about the social pragmatics implications of cell phone use. Cell phones take away from the natural flow of conversation, providing limited opportunity to initiate conversation with classmates. The best way to establish relationships with peers is to provide downtime to help elicit conversation with new peers, if a child is always distracted he will not feel the need to begin a natural conversation since he is always somewhere else. In today's society we have seen the impact of limited social interactions among adolescents with the skyrocketing depression rates and anxiety. Loneliness is a public health crisis and we need to act now to help children develop the appropriate skills to establish friendships. One way to do this is eliminate cell phone use in schools.

Amy Rattleff

Self

Plano, TX

Please vote NO on this bill. Cell phones have been an actual lifeline into the happenings of public school students. Without cell phones, parents would have had no idea what was happening with woke curriculum, DEI, LGBT issues and more during COVID. Student phones captured and documented these activities and it was the only medium parents were informed what was happening inside the schools. Students' access to phones is a safety issue. Students have been the ones calling 911 in emergency situations like shootings. They also serve as tracking devices in these situations for law enforcement and parents to locate them. Removing these devices does not solve the problem of too much technology as students are on Chromebooks all day! Students can access the same apps and websites on Chromebooks as their phones. In the recent Killeen ISD stabbing, despite a KISD ban on students having cellphones on campus during the school day, parents of Smith Middle School students said they were getting texts shortly after the stabbing.

Crystal Edwards' son texted her asking, "can you come and get me from school, a girl has been stabbed." Has these children not being able to get to their phones, parents would not have known what was happening for hours. Taking a lifeline away from students is not the way. 20 years ago, students didn't need instant access to their parents like they do now. Between, sexual predators at school and safety issues, parents need to be able to locate and communicate freely with their children. This bill is a gov't overreach. If TASB and the teacher unions support this legislation, conservatives should reconsider.

David Kossey

Self, previous educator of 7 years, spouse of 17+ year educator, HD87 resident against HB3

Stinnett, TX

Apologies, not intentional to lie, but Dutton's questions lead me to this thought, again, I wish I could be there in person.

The demand for this law for state support of school, is proof of how much control over education parents have, something that HB3 isn't going to change. Parents control the classroom, the school boards, their students, and almost everything else in education. The only thing Superintendents, Principals, and educators control in the classroom is with the laws the state passes. Educators can't teach outside the curriculum, principals can't discipline outside of law. However, parents can do anything and all things to control the classroom without consideration for the law. It's that simple.

I'd love to agree with the 7th grader, but fiscally and as a matter of principle, I think the bill proposed (with my changes haha), gets a good start. If failures exist in the future, they can be adjusted easily. A full outright ban would be great, but as a parent, I'd love to talk my student through a major event rather than them staying in silence and fear alone. This isn't a dream, my nephew was caught in the bathroom during a lockdown. He hid with his shoes on the toilet seat, alone. He had his phone, he was able to call his mother. I can't imagine what fears would go through the mind of a child stuck in that same situation. That reason alone, even if specific and something I hope no other child has to face is a reality I experienced. There's no way you could convince me to take away phones completely. Times have changed, and unless we're going to mandate all staff (willing) are armed....

Ok, I think I'm done. Fix it, pass it, and prove you support public schools, even if HB 3 and the withholding of funds show otherwise.

David Kossey

Self, previous educator of 7 years, spouse of 17+ year educator, HD87 resident against HB3
Stinnett, TX

I'm for HB 1481, not as written, but as I've proposed changes in previous submissions. I'm biased, but, it's needed.

I only wish that the House would have to travel to different parts of the state for hearings like these. Having them in Austin sure disallows in person input into these hearings. Being 7 hours from Austin, we can't be there daily with all business. I'd love to see tele-hearing input through skype or other means to allow all Texans input.

On that note, thank you Rep. Schoolcraft for noticing "why do we need to tell schools what to do" "it's better if they handle things like this" on their one "they seem to do a better job." But yet, HB3 is attempting to say schools aren't doing a good job, but you want the power to be in the public schools to handle this business? Please stay consistent.

I want you to also know, so long as chromebooks or ipads or similar tech is used, students have found ways to access their snapchat, instagrams, and other social media accounts. The idea of 1 to 1 tech is almost as bad or in some cases worse than cell phones, especially when used for 7 out of 8 classes for the day. Not to mention, vision (eyes, not outlook) has shown much more nearsightedness in the recent decade.

We don't need to spend money to have this idea. We don't need pouches, we don't need "secure storage" we simply need a lawful means to empower classroom educators to have a means to remove distractions without having parents say "it's not against the law" or "this other teacher allows it" etc.

This is the last submission, if what I've said doesn't influence the bill, nothing I say will. Thank you for your time. Vote NO for HB3, but fix this bill and vote YES.

Aileen Blachowski, President

Texas Education 911

Canyon, TX

We agree cell phones should be prohibited during instructional time in schools. Teaching students self control regarding this matter must be accompanied by strong enforcement mechanisms. We suggest parent pick-up of device or a graduating penalty fee schedule associated with serial violations of in-class use.

What is not addressed by this bill is the fact that student cell phone video has been responsible for exposing so much teacher and student misbehavior, providing shocking clarity about what we now know is corrosive to healthy, safe, unbiased learning environments. We cannot deny student cell phones have been pivotal in exposing woke teaching, the extent of out-of-control violence and lack of general respect. In my own child's case, his cell phone was an alert-line to concerning lessons, attempts to restrict his freedom of

speech and parental guidance in the face of potential acts of retaliation against my son for my active involvement as a watchdog over district actions. To restrict student cell phones in locked devices which schools must spend money on is inadvisable for many reasons. Here are a few that deserve serious consideration: 1) legislating expenditures on locking storage devices makes this a vendor bill, and we oppose such a move; and 2) recent years have demonstrated innumerable examples of attempts by school staff to make kids conform with something the child knew was not right. When school officials threaten, a child should be able to communicate with his or her parent; 3) in the event of legitimate emergencies, parents who purchase and provide the cell phones expect to and deserve to be able to locate and communicate with their children. Full stop. Parents in Killeen ISD recently expressed frustration over the lack of clear communication from the phone-free district. Thirdly, many junior high and high school math classes rely on the desmos app for calculations instead of the traditional and expensive graphing calculators.

Teachers will have to wean off app use and other teaching procedures that require submissions by cell phone. The fourth serious consideration is the hypocrisy of banning personal electronic devices while saturating the school day with only state-issued electronic devices. The overwhelming majority of learning research shows that foundational skills are best learned with classical learning tools—books, pencils and paper. The rapid rise in myopia in children is also linked to screen exposure in children. In this, the state is complicit. Let's limit ALL screen time in school to improve proficiency in foundational skills, while teaching students self-control with their personal devices.

Finally, the ban on cell phones must apply to teachers and students alike. Many students have "ratted out" their teachers for lack of engagement and teaching. The consequences must also apply to both.

We would support the bill only
with clarifying amendments and limits on all screen time.

Jackie Besinger

National Alliance for Education Freedom

Austin, TX

Against the HB1481. This bill seeks to centralize power and impose government control over local decision-making, undermining the very essence of our local school board races. Such interference from a distant authority threatens to drown out the voices of our communities, as we do not need an expansive government agenda dictating further the future of decision making in public schools. We must preserve the autonomy of our local leaders to make decisions that reflect the unique needs and values of our students and families.

Tracy Hanes

Self

Victoria, TX

As a strong advocate for the tried-and-true classical model of education, limited government, and local control, I OPPOSE HB 1481. While I fully agree that students should put away personal devices during instructional time, we do not need another state law for this—ISDs should have the authority to establish their own cell phone policies which should be decided locally, not by the state.

The real issue is not personal cell phones but the overuse of technology in classrooms. Technology should be a tool, not a teacher. The classical model of education emphasizes direct instruction, critical thinking, and deep engagement with books, paper and pencil—none of which can be replaced by screens. We must remove 1:1 devices from K-8 and limit their use through 12th grade. The push for online learning, driven by Governor Abbott and the Texas Education Agency, is failing our students. Excessive screen time is contributing to learning loss, yet #txlege refuses to address it. Instead of banning cell phones, lawmakers should focus on the real harm caused by school-issued devices like Chromebooks, which expose children to hours of unnecessary screen time and EMFs daily.

The 2024 Texas GOP Platform (Plank 148: Less Tech for Little Texans) recognizes the dangers of excessive screen time and calls for strict limits on one-to-one device use:

- Children under 10 should be limited to 30 minutes per six-hour span on 1:1 devices and VR headsets.
- Children ages 10-14 should be limited to two hours per day due to well-documented adverse health effects,

including EMF exposure and abnormal behavior disorders.

If the state truly prioritizes the well-being of Texas children, it should be working to remove unnecessary technology from classrooms, not creating more government mandates on cell phones while ignoring the much larger issue of 1:1 devices.

Overexposure to electronic devices is linked to serious health concerns, including:

- Sleep deprivation
- ADHD, anxiety, and depression
- Increased stress and impulsivity
- Obesity and Type 2 diabetes
- Developmental delays, reduced executive function, and impaired social skills
- EMF overexposure, which is particularly concerning in large schools with thousands of connected devices in

constant use

It is hypocritical for the Legislature to regulate cell phone use while ignoring the widespread damage caused by mandatory 1:1 devices.

Cell phone policies should be decided locally, not by the state. The Texas GOP Platform supports reducing screen time for young students, and it's time for legislators to follow that lead. We must get 1:1 devices out of classrooms, return to proven, traditional education methods, and restore real learning for Texas children.

For Liberty,

Tracy Hanes

#MAHA #txlege

Christine Broughal

Texans for Special Education Reform

Cedar Park, TX

We at Texans for Special Education Reform are testifying against HB 1481 as filed as it does not allow for exceptions for use as a communication device or other tool by a student with a disability. There are many students with disabilities who benefit from the use of electronic devices in school. To restrict their use would inhibit these students ability to access, and make progress in the general education curriculum.

Kevin M. Jackson Jr.

Self/Educational Diagnostician

AUSTIN, TX

Hello. Thank you for your attention to the State of our Schools. I am a Texas dad and former public school teacher who is concerned with my children's education. I believe cellphone usage should be limited during instructional time. Some reasons to prohibit cellphone usage include: Distraction and Reduced Focus: Cellphones can be a major distraction in the classroom, leading to decreased focus on learning and lower academic performance,

Mental Health Concerns: Excessive screen time and social media use have been linked to increased anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues in young people, Cyberbullying and Social Pressure: Cellphones can facilitate cyberbullying and social comparison, negatively impacting students' well-being, Academic Integrity: Cellphones can be used for cheating or accessing unauthorized information during exams or assignments, and Teacher Morale: Constant distractions from cellphones can negatively impact teacher morale and their ability to effectively teach.

Sincerely, a concerned Texas dad and former public school teacher.

Leslie Milford

Self, Educator

Levelland, TX

As both an educator and a parent, I strongly oppose HB 1481 as it is presented. While reducing distractions in the classroom is important, an outright ban on personal wireless devices during instructional time is an overly rigid and impractical approach that ignores the realities of modern education and student safety. More importantly, the state should not be stepping in to dictate classroom policies that are best handled at the local level by schools, educators, and parents.

First, technology is an integral part of learning. Many students use their personal devices as educational tools—whether for research, accessing online resources, or engaging with assistive technology. Not all school districts can provide one-to-one devices for students, and for some, personal phones and tablets are necessary for completing assignments. By banning these devices outright, we risk widening the digital divide and limiting students’ ability to engage with lessons in a way that suits their individual learning needs.

Second, as a parent, I should have the right to decide whether my child carries a phone to school—not the state. Parents know their children’s needs best, and whether it’s for staying in touch during after-school activities, managing health conditions, or simply ensuring they can reach us when necessary, that decision should remain ours. Taking that choice away is government overreach. Additionally, in the event of a safety issue—whether it’s a personal emergency, a lockdown, or another crisis—students should have the ability to contact their parents directly. Restricting access to their own devices in these critical moments could create unnecessary fear and delays in communication. Schools can and should establish reasonable guidelines for responsible phone use, but the state has no place in making that decision for families.

Finally, enforcing this bill will place an unnecessary burden on teachers and staff. We are already stretched thin managing large classrooms, addressing academic needs, and supporting students’ well-being. Adding the responsibility of policing cell phone storage and enforcement will only detract from valuable instructional time. Rather than a blanket ban, schools should adopt policies that encourage responsible technology use, balancing educational benefits with appropriate guidelines for minimizing distractions.

Decisions about classroom management should be left to those who know students best—teachers, administrators, and parents. The state has no business micromanaging how schools handle technology in the classroom. Instead of punishing all students for the misuse of a few, we should focus on digital literacy and responsible device usage. HB 1481, as it is presented, is not the solution—it’s an unnecessary overreach that will hinder learning and put students at risk.

George Brian Vachris, P.E.

self

Humble, TX

As a former certified teacher, I am generally FOR HB 1481, but I think the committee should examine incorporating parts of HB 515 (Troxclair) into the bill. HB 515 essentially prohibits student access to their devices for the entire day (with medical exceptions) whereas HB 1481 prohibits access during class time. Many students during lunch or other interclass times get self-absorbed into their electronic devices rather than engaging in social interaction with other students. Many students exhibit addictive behavior toward their devices. I believe that at the least districts should be given the option between the two choices. Please consider a possible merger of the two bills.

Bradley Willi

Self

Lewisville, TX

I support this bill. I am an educator currently working in a district with a cell phones. Without cell phones in school, there has been a decrease in major behaviors and an increase in instruction time.

David Kossey

Self, previous educator of 7 years, spouse of 17+ year educator, HD87 resident against HB3

Stinnett, TX

I keep hearing "why can't local schools just do this" and "why are they afraid of parents." Imagine if you will, why many members aren't holding town halls across the state, and those who are, aren't holding them as often, why is that? That's the same issue school districts face, especially rural ones. You can have 1 or 2 parents control the school boards direction knowing that they own a majority of property or value in the area. Texans are extremely vocal about their rights, and that extends to their ability to talk to their kids anytime they want no matter what's happening during the class day.

I submitted 2 previous comments, this being my third. I'm catching up on the hearing. Not passing this at the state level will also show the failures of HB3, where many private schools have outlawed them as a matter of admittance and contract, but yet public schools have limited means to do this.

I get it, only a handful of committee members have been in a classroom. Even Fairly was in a catholic 'private' public school. This isn't a slant, but visit a few rural schools and you'll see just how different these schools operate at the board level and the same powers that control the state legislature from outside the state to influence HB3's passage, the school board members face but by their true and absolutely local outspoken constituents.