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STATE SENATOR
District 17



OREGON STATE SENATE

Testimony in Support of HB 2251: Restricting Cellphone Use in Schools

March 26th, 2025

House Committee on Education

3:00 p.m., Hearing Room B

Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and Members of the House Committee on Education:

For the record, my name is Lisa Reynolds, and I represent West Portland and communities in Northeastern Washington County across the way in the State Senate. I have been a pediatrician for 20-plus years and continue to practice when the legislature is not in session.

What if I told you we have a school policy with zero fiscal, which will:

- Improve academic performance^{1 2}
- Improve youth mental health^{3 4 5}
- And Improve school attendance⁶

Well, HB 2251 accomplishes all three. And, did I mention NO fiscal?

You know, it strikes me, that this committee, and other folks in this building, are charged with assembling a massive K-12 education package, “billions and billions,” to quote Carl Sagan. As we should, of course! We talk about student success, quality education models, and early literacy.

But I have really come to believe that we are tying one hand behind a student’s back. Or a teacher’s back, for that matter with the ubiquitous distractions of cellphones.

When the student is in a classroom but is distracted by their phone - by its mere presence, or by the actual content on their screen – content that generates tremendous revenue for tech companies –, the billions and billions of dollars in our K-12 budget are going to have less impact.

And, let’s face it, impact is what we must see in the coming years in our schools. It’s the talk of the town and the talk of this building.

¹ Lynda Charters, “AAO 2024: Cell Phone Use and Student Performance,” *Ophthalmology Times*, October 18, 2024, <https://www.ophthalmologytimes.com/view/cell-phone-use-and-student-performance>.

² Melissa Huey and David Giguere, “The Impact of Smartphone Use on Course Comprehension and Psychological Well-Being in the College Classroom,” *Innovative Higher Education* 48, no. 3 (November 18, 2022): 527–37, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-022-09638-1>.

³ Sarah M. Coyne et al., “Suicide Risk in Emerging Adulthood: Associations with Screen Time over 10 Years,” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 50, no. 12 (February 2, 2021): 2324–38, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-020-01389-6>.

⁴ Melissa G. Hunt et al., “No More Fomo: Limiting Social Media Decreases Loneliness and Depression,” *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 37, no. 10 (December 2018): 751–68, <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2018.37.10.751>

⁵ Kira E. Riehm et al., “Associations between Time Spent Using Social Media and Internalizing and Externalizing Problems among US Youth,” *JAMA Psychiatry* 76, no. 12 (December 1, 2019): 1266, <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2019.2325>.

⁶ Data from North Clackamas School District

We must lift our state and our children up from having some of the worst reading and math scores in the US.⁷

We must lift our HS graduation rates - we are at about 82%, while the national average is 87%.^{8 9}

We must lift ourselves out of Oregon's ranking of having the worst mental health status among our youth.¹⁰

You know, I remember the smoking lounge in my high school. I'm that old. The SMOKING LOUNGE. And I remember seeing my brother out there in the smoking area when he was a senior.

Of course, over the years, we saw fit to shut down high school smoking lounges. We made the assessment that the impact on students' health, the co-dependence of the school enabling youth smoking and nicotine addiction far outweighed any reason to offer this privilege to students.

My brother remains addicted to cigarettes, and it was his youthful exposure that locked it all in for him.

Let's not be complicit with the addiction to social media. Let's no longer turn a blind eye to the serious damage that cellphone content is wreaking on our youth. Let's help our students thrive and our schools climb out of the academic and mental health holes we are in.

To continue doing the same thing and expecting a different outcome just makes no sense.

As a pediatrician, as an evidence-based policy nerd, as someone who knows Oregon students' best days are ahead if we have the courage to make some tough choices,

Please join me in advocating for ending the use of cell phones in what should be the rich, engaging, learning environments of Oregon classrooms.

⁷ Julia Silverman, "Oregon Math, Reading Achievement among the Nation's Worst, New Scores Show," *The Oregonian/OregonLive*, January 29, 2025, <https://www.oregonlive.com/education/2025/01/oregon-math-reading-achievement-among-the-nations-worst-new-scores-show.html>.

⁸ Julia Silverman, "Oregon High School Graduation Rate Rises Slightly, Even as Other Academic Indicators Flatline," *The Oregonian/OregonLive*, accessed March 26, 2025, <https://www.oregonlive.com/education/2025/01/oregon-high-school-graduation-rate-rises-slightly-even-as-other-academic-indicators-flatline.html>.

⁹ Anna Merod, "High School Graduation Rates Held Steady in 2022-23," *K-12 Dive*, accessed March 27, 2025, <https://www.k12dive.com/news/us-high-school-graduation-rates-2022-23-nces/736152/#:~:text=The%20average%20ofour%2Dyear%20high,didn%27t%20increase%20graduation%20rates.>

¹⁰ John Yang et al., "Why Oregon Is the Worst-Ranked State for Youth Mental Health," *PBS News*, accessed March 27, 2025, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/why-oregon-is-the-worst-ranked-state-for-youth-mental-health>.

General -

Doreen Dodgen-Magee, *Devised!: Balancing Life and Technology in a Digital World* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018).

Jonathan Haidt, *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* (New York: Penguin Press, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, 2024).