

Submitter: I Mathews
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2251

To the Oregon Legislature,

As a student in Springfield during the Thurston High School shooting and mother of two students, I urge you to reject HB 2251. This bill's rigid restrictions on student communication devices paired with exemptions only for students with 504/IEPs will cause undue hardship. The exemption could stigmatize already vulnerable students by singling them out as different from their peers. This is not equity. It is a policy that risks alienating a portion of the student population while failing to address the root issue: our refusal to digitize solutions that balance safety with modern realities.

Blanket bans on devices punish students for systemic problems. Yes, social media and apps harm focus and mental health, but demonizing devices altogether ignores the nuance. Let schools craft solutions that digitize safeguards (e.g., locked app modes during classes, emergency-only access, and tech agreements co-designed with families) that address the actual issues instead of banning devices and creating additional rules.

Phones and other electronic devices can be a lifeline during lockdowns, bullying incidents, or medical crises. Yes HB 2251 dismisses this reality and places teachers in the impossible position of policing devices while managing emergencies at an even greater degree. Worse, it creates a visible divide between students who "need" exemptions and those who don't, deepening stigma in an era where mental health struggles are already pervasive.

Do not prioritize control over compassion. Amend HB 2251 to empower schools with flexible, modern tools, not punitive mandates that stigmatize students and endanger communities.

Sincerely,

I. Mathews