



Chairman Brenner, Vice-Chairman Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to speak today. My name is Mark Michael. I am the Vice-President and General Counsel of Summit Academy Management. Summit Academy Management, also referred to as "SAM", is a nonprofit community school management company that operates 21 community schools throughout Ohio serving the educational needs of approximately 2000 students.

Our educational program and curriculum are designed to be a safe haven for children with learning challenges such as Autism, ADD, and ADHD. Over 70% of our students receive special education services. With me today is Tim Cassell, with Governmental Networking. We are here to speak in support of S.B. 158 – prohibiting cellular telephone use in public schools.

In 2020, the Governing Authorities of schools managed by SAM implemented policies prohibiting student possession and use of cell phones during the school day. Exceptions have been granted only on a case-by-case basis. In preparation for this testimony, SAM surveyed our principals to examine the impact of these policies. SAM found that the ban on cell phones has had a positive impact.

Each of our school directors sets the procedural process to be used. Cell phones are collected from students when entering the school in the morning and returned at the end of the day. The cell phones are stored in boxes, pouches, or folders and secured in the



office. One school uses a product called a "YONDR" pouch. The students place their phones in the pouch, which then locks. Pouches may then be stored in the office or carried by the student. Students are unable to unlock the pouch or use their phone, but they are unable to open the pouch. Upon leaving the school, the YONDR pouch is unlocked at the office.

Students are allowed to carry their cello phone if the student's IEP/504 plan requires it. Exceptions are also made if a student's physician indicates the student has a medical condition. SAM schools currently have approximately 80 students in these categories. In medical cases, Roughly half of SAM schools allow the students to carry their phone and half still collect them at the beginning of the day. If collected, accommodations are made. In one case, a diabetic student's phone is kept in the office. The student is called to the office 3 times per day for checks. Results are then provided to the student's parent. In other cases, students go to the office to access their phone for checks.

Students often attempt to violate the policy. In most schools, attempted violations occur occasionally, 1-3 times per week. Students are subject to the disciplinary code for violations.

The cell phone ban has had a positive impact on student engagement in the classroom. It has reduced students coordinating skipping classes, students are less distracted and more engaged. Academic performance has generally increased and student behavior has



improved. Students' interpersonal interactions with each other in social and academic situations have increased and bullying has decreased.

With respect to cyberbullying, our schools have reported some improvement due to the ban. It does not occur during the school day since students are not carrying their phones. However, it still occurs after school in the evenings and on weekends through their cell phone and online social platforms. Students still bring the issues with them to school from any cyberbullying occurring outside of school.

In summary, SAM has seen a positive impact on our schools. Student engagement, interpersonal interactions, and academic performance have improved and there are less opportunities for negative behaviors. Our school administrators and teachers are very much in support of the ban on cell phones. On behalf of Summit Academy Management, thank you for the opportunity to testify to these matters.