

April 10, 2025

Chairman and Members of the Senate Committee,

Our names are Angela Dabbelt and Laura Carrier and we are here today not only as concerned parents, but as people who have spent countless hours researching, organizing, and advocating for sensible tech safety for our children. We are the founders of the Upper Arlington chapter of *OK to Delay*, a national grassroots movement building a community of informed and empowered parents who will delay giving their kids smart devices and reverse the devastating trends we are seeing with children and teens mental and physical health. Our group is made up of a community of over 200 parents, educators, and mental health professionals who believe that protecting childhood means pushing back against the pressure of early, unfettered access to addictive technology.

We are here today to urge you — to beg you — to support S. 158 with the amendments recommended by *Unite for Safe Social Media* to enact a bell-to-bell cell phone ban in Ohio's schools. Why? Because our children are not okay.

The data is clear. Since the rise of the smartphone and social media around 2010, we have seen staggering increases in youth anxiety, depression, self-harm, and suicide — especially among girls. Jonathan Haidt's research in *The Anxious Generation* reveals that between 2010 and 2022, rates of major depression in adolescent girls nearly doubled. ER visits for self-harm tripled among 10 to 14-year-old girls. This is not a coincidence. It tracks directly with the rise of smartphone and social media usage among young people. And unfortunately, the data has continued to show declines across the board.

And where are kids spending a significant chunk of their waking lives? In school.

Schools should be sanctuaries for learning, social development, and emotional growth. But instead, our kids are glued to their phones — not just at lunch or between classes, but often *in* class. They are checking notifications under desks. They are scrolling TikTok in the bathroom. They are comparing themselves to airbrushed influencers and spiraling into anxiety before the next bell rings. It is nearly impossible for teachers to compete with the algorithms designed to capture and monetize our children's attention.

This is not just about academics, although of course attention spans, focus, and performance are suffering. It's about mental health. It's about social development. It's about physical health. It's about reclaiming school as a place where kids can be fully present — with their teachers, their peers, and themselves.

A bell-to-bell ban is not extreme. It is common sense. France and the Netherlands have already implemented school-wide phone bans. Many schools across the U.S. have voluntarily done the same, including many private schools in Columbus — and they are reporting better classroom

engagement, fewer behavior issues, and improved student well-being. The ban doesn't have to be punitive — it can be structured, supported by school staff, and accompanied by education for students and families about why this matters.

*OK to Delay* exists because parents across the country — and right here in Ohio — are seeing the same troubling patterns. We are organizing, speaking up, and trying to move the needle. We started our local chapter because we couldn't just sit back and watch childhood vanish into screens. We host information nights, distribute research-backed resources, and create community for families who want to raise healthy kids in a tech-saturated world. This proposed legislation is a critical step in that same direction.

We don't let kids vape in class. We don't let them drink in the cafeteria. Why would we allow an equally addictive and damaging influence to remain in their hands all day?

This is our number one voting issue. Let's draw a line. Let's put the health and well-being of our children first. Let's give teachers a fighting chance. And let's send a clear message: school is for learning, for growing, for connecting — not for scrolling.

Thank you for your time, your attention, and for your commitment to Ohio's future — we appreciate all that you do.

Sincerely,

Angela Dabbelt & Laura Carrier

Parents, Advocates, and Founders — OK to Delay, Upper Arlington Chapter