

Senate Bill 158

Opponent Testimony

Karen Keefer, BSN, RN

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chairman Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and Esteemed Members of the Ohio Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written opponent testimony on Ohio Senate Bill 158.

As a mother of three (3) children currently enrolled in Ohio public schools in Richland County and a nurse of 24-years, I would like to take this opportunity to testify in opposition of Senate Bill 158. First, I would like to address the medical implications for those Ohio school children who monitor their blood glucose levels with a digital monitor. Their cellphones are required to capture those essential readings throughout their day to properly maintain their blood glucose levels for their health and wellbeing during their school day. I and many parents across the state deal with students with anxiety, sensory processing disorders, learning differences, and a host of other reasons that we prefer to keep our students grounded in communication with us, as their parents, throughout their school day. Secondly, I would like to address that [Ohio House Bill 250](#) passed last legislative session, providing guidance for Ohio's local districts on policy creation for cell phone responsible, reasonable, and respectful usage during school hours. Many of you, Chairman Brenner included, understood that this law required Ohio districts to individually adopt their own cellphone policies no later than July 2025, ahead of the 2025-2026 school year. Yet ahead of this deadline, we have Ohio Senate Bill 158 seeking to implement an all-out ban in a local control state that would require students, parent owned property, cellphones be banned and confiscated in our public education spaces which taxpayer are paying for. As a taxpayer, I take issue with this. How can state legislature ban cellphones, a conduit for communication with our children, in this public space? I believe confiscating cell phones is a violation of the student's due process, which will face legal challenges should this legislation continue toward passage related to the increasingly and widely used phrase "in loco parentis" among Ohio public school administrators in this public space. Third, I believe there will be additional legal challenges that will result from this ill guided attempt to again constrain parent access to their children, effectively locking parents out via communication access with their children amid their public-school day. I can attest to our district sending out district communications on multiple occasions throughout our school year their phone systems were down and seeking an immediate resolution to the situation/issue. I believe banning cell phones on the public-school campus is another government overreach, again effectively attempting to disconnect parents from their children in public education settings and the ability of students to safeguard themselves from bullying, harassment, hazing, and inappropriate content/surveys/questionnaires that never appear in canvas for parents to see via their parent canvas accounts. There is a form of accountability when students can record what goes on around them. Fourth, if we are going to encourage STEM and AI within our public education curricula, shouldn't we be preparing Ohio students to reasonably, responsibly, and respectfully utilize this technology which includes their cellphones? I am encouraged as a nurse to always keep my

cellphone with me. If I require information for my patients, it is always at my fingertips. The understanding that students, especially in high school, use phones much like adults do—they review their schedules, plan their days, and coordinate with friends, family, and co-workers. Smartphones can support students' autonomy, providing access to school learning management systems, calendars, and even information recording.

I thought the goal of the Ohio Legislature and Governor DeWine was "Future Forward" leading with activities to engage them beyond school, including technology being at the forefront of Ohio's industry and career paths for Ohio students. We then must teach Ohio students how to reasonably, responsibly, and respectfully utilize their cellphones amid their school day. Even amid the challenges smartphones present in a classroom setting, there is a role for schools to teach students to use them as powerful tools for learning. Ohio Superintendents have already testified of increased incidence of Google Chromebook misuse; if this ban was about distractibility, mental health, and wellbeing their faces wouldn't be in their Chromebooks all day and we'd resort back to physical textbooks the students are encouraged to take home for parents to aid them in their studies! My sixth-grade student is discouraged from bringing her Google Chromebook home at all due to the cost of repair should it become damaged or destroyed. Likewise, there have been no studies conducted to date with data of who exactly is alerting/activating 911 amid school violence, safety, or security situations within Ohio or nationally. I believe the answer may be students and staff members with cellphones are the first to alert/activate 911 amid these situations. I would argue the problem is not consistently enforcing bullying, which includes the lack of cyberbullying as a matter of policy, and cellphone policies within Ohio school districts, not the presence of cellphones themselves. Keeping the July 2025 deadline for all Ohio district school boards to develop, implement, and enforce their own policies in accordance with Ohio House Bill 250 ahead of the 2025-2026 school year based on their unique knowledge of their district's student population was and continues to be the correct local control state guidance from Ohio Legislature. Please take a moment to review the resources with accompanying links I have provided below.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on Senate Bill 158.

Respectfully,

Karen Keefer, BSN, RN

Richland County Ohio

Resources Links:

[Little evidence exists to argue for or against the role of smartphones during school emergencies.](#)

[No data on activation of emergency response student/staff vs SRO, only stating response times
NOT citing who or how campus or local first responders were activated.](#)

Ohio House Bill 250

Study revealing little improvement of Cell Phone Free School Day

Cyberbullying/bullying is a related and much more common safety issue in schools. Evidence on the effects of cell phone bans on cyberbullying is mixed, because there is a notable overlap between cyberbullying and more traditional, in person bullying; and even in the absence of phones, bullying is likely to continue without bullying-specific interventions

With intentionality and training, educators could begin to harness the power of these tools for structured, multimedia learning in the future.