
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5035 (as amended by House "A")*

AN ACT REQUIRING SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO BAN CELLULAR PHONES IN THE CLASSROOM.

SUMMARY

This bill bans public school students from accessing their personal wireless communication devices on school property during the regular school day, with certain exceptions. It also prohibits (1) these students from accessing social media using the school's internet during the school day (unless permitted for instructional purposes) and (2) local or regional boards of education ("school boards") from using social media as the only way they communicate with students and their parents or guardians.

Under the bill, students' devices must be turned off and stored as the school board determines. School boards must develop policies to implement the bill's prohibitions and notify parents and students about the policy.

Lastly, it makes technical and conforming changes, including by repealing provisions in existing law (1) prohibiting students from using remotely activated paging devices and (2) allowing schools to restrict cell phone use in their schools.

*House Amendment "A" (1) adds the provision banning school boards from using social media as the only way of communicating with parents and students; (2) narrows the types of personal devices that may be used if permitted for instructional purposes; (3) expands what the policy must cover; and (4) makes various other minor, technical, and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2027

SCOPE OF BAN

The bill prohibits holding, viewing, wearing, or otherwise using “wireless communication devices” to communicate, access the Internet, or play games, or for any other function commonly associated with the devices. “Wireless communication devices” are portable, wireless devices capable of providing data communication between two or more parties, including cell phones, tablets, computers, laptops, gaming devices, and smart watches.

The bill’s ban applies specifically to:

1. wireless communication devices owned or controlled by a student or his or her parent or guardian (not to devices issued to students by the school board) and
2. public school students in grades kindergarten to 12 and preschool students in a program operated by a school board.

The bill’s social media restrictions apply to any electronic medium where users create and view user-generated content (such as videos, photos, blogs, or instant messages).

Exceptions to the Ban

Under the bill, the ban does not apply to any technology the school district provides to students for instructional purposes. It also does not apply when:

1. a student requires access to a device under an individualized education program (IEP) or 504 plan;
2. the device is necessary for a student’s health or well-being, as determined by a physician, physician’s assistant, or advanced practice registered nurse; or
3. students are permitted to use personal computers, laptops, or tablets for instructional purposes under the school board’s policy.

BOARD POLICIES

The bill requires school boards to adopt, and update when necessary, a policy implementing the bill's ban, considering the unique needs of teachers, administrators, parents, guardians, and students in the district.

The policy must cover:

1. the bill's personal device ban and exceptions;
2. how devices must be stored, such as in a student's locker or specified location, during the regular school day;
3. discipline and enforcement for violations; and
4. procedures for communicating between school boards and students' parents and guardians if an emergency happens during the school day.

Under the bill, school boards must annually notify students' parents and guardians about the policy and procedures, as well as include them in the school district's student handbook.

BACKGROUND

Related Bill

sHB 5149, favorably reported by the Education Committee, similarly bans students from using mobile electronic devices during the school day.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 29 Nay 16 (03/16/2026)