



*From the offices of Representative Kim Wallan, Representative April Dobson,
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Oregon Lawmakers Pass Bill to Limit Smartphone Use in Schools

SALEM, Ore. – With bipartisan support, the Oregon House of Representatives passed [House Bill 2251](#), which would prohibit Oregon students from using their smartphones during the school day. With this legislation, Oregon will join the growing number of states taking action to support students’ mental health and academic outcomes by reducing digital distractions.

The bill requires each school district to adopt a policy prohibiting student use of personal electronic devices, with limited exceptions, from bell-to-bell but allows local districts to choose how to implement the policy – such as using magnetized pouches or requiring cell phones to be “off and away” in students’ backpacks.

“I’m proud to be joining 17 other states reducing student access to smartphones during the school day,” said **Rep. Kim Wallan (R- Medford)**, who introduced HB 2251. “I find it notable that no state that has curbed phone use in schools has reversed course. I’m confident that this legislation will improve outcomes for Oregon’s students and teachers.”

The bill provides exemptions for the use of personal laptops for schoolwork and devices that are medically necessary or part of a student’s IEP or Section 504 plan. School districts that have already implemented bell-to-bell restrictions on student cell phone use have seen improvements in behavior, attendance, and academic performance.

“We have to improve outcomes for Oregon students,” said **Rep. April Dobson (D- Happy Valley & N Clackamas County)**, a chief-sponsor of the bill. “Our teachers shouldn’t have to

compete with trillion-dollar tech companies and the most advanced social media algorithms for students' attention in the classroom.”

Developed over the course of the session by a bipartisan coalition of lawmakers, HB 2251 provides needed relief for educators who are increasingly finding themselves policing cell phone usage rather than focusing on teaching.

“In Bend-La Pine, I’ve heard directly from parents and educators about what a positive impact getting phones out of the classroom has had. But these can be tough conversations, and this bill gives our school districts a push to do what’s best for our kids,” said **Rep. Emerson Levy (D-Central Oregon)**.

This bill now heads to the Senate, where it is championed by pediatrician **Sen. Lisa Reynolds, MD (D-Portland)**, who said, “I see firsthand the clear and compelling evidence that constant smartphone use harms our kids' emotional health and is detrimental to their learning. As we discuss our largest ever school budget, I fear we keep one hand tied behind our students' and teachers' backs with the distraction of cell phones and their mental health impacts. This is a chance to create a culture shift in our schools, make a positive impact on students' learning and brain development, and make our lunchrooms loud again with community and conversation.”

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