

Senate Education Committee

Ryan Meleedy 271-4151

HB 781-FN, requiring school districts to adopt policies establishing a cell phone-free education.

Hearing Date: April 22, 2025

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Ward, Sullivan, Abbas, Prentiss and Altschiller

Members of the Committee Absent : None

Bill Analysis: This bill requires school districts to adopt policies governing student cell phone use in schools.

Sponsors:
Rep. Litchfield

Who supports the bill: Eric Pauer, Ann Marie Banfield, Kristine Tonkin, Cassandra Curtis, Deborah Fexis, Ruth O'Neal, Daniel Richardson, Wendy Chase, Karen Jacobsen, Nancy Brennan, Diane Heller, Susan Moore, Becky Wilson (NH School Boards Association), Debrah Howes (American Federation of Teachers - NH), Lois Cote

Who opposes the bill: May Youngclaus, James Chapman, Brandy Hardiman, Sallie Fellows.

Who is neutral on the bill: No one signed in neutrality to this bill.

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Representative Litchfield

- Representative Litchfield introduced House Bill 781-FN.
- She explained that she introduced the bill after having attended the Education Excellence Conference and learned how far the issue of cellphones in the classroom extends.
- She established that this bill aligns with the Governor's established priorities.
- She stated that children are experiencing increased rates of depression while having 24-hour access to their cell phones, and she felt that this bill may help to manage this issue.

- She established that some school districts utilize the company “Yonder”, explaining that it is a pack that student store their phone in all day long, and it requires a magnet to open the pack to access their phones at the end of the day.
- She established that the bill originally had a fiscal note for methods of phone use prevention during instructional hours, but in light of recent budget developments, the fiscal note was removed.
- She established that though the bill *does* limit students from using their phones in class, it would permit them to use phones outside of instructional hours. She also pointed out that the bill establishes exemptions for students with varying needs, such as students with diabetes or special needs.
- She explained that the intent of the bill is not to prevent kids from using their phones altogether, but rather to make sure they are paying attention in class without the temptation to distract themselves via their cellphones.
- She added that there is a growing call among teachers for the legislature to take this issue out of their hands, as many teachers are struggling to enforce class-by-class phone rules and feel that there is a lack of legal and/or administrative support for this enforcement. If there is a defined policy on phone use in class, it would allow teachers to teach more effectively.