
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5149

AN ACT CONCERNING PHONE-FREE SCHOOLS.

This bill bans public school students in grades kindergarten through 12 from possessing or using personal mobile electronic devices (“personal devices”) during the regular school day, with certain exceptions. It defines a mobile electronic device as any handheld or portable electronic equipment that can provide data communication between two or more people, including cell phones, text messaging devices, laptops, gaming equipment, and equipment for taking digital images.

Under the bill, the ban applies only to devices owned or controlled by students (or their parents or guardians), not those school boards issue to students. The bill also permits personal device use if it is necessary (1) to implement an individualized education program (IEP) or a 504 plan for students with disabilities or (2) for the student’s health and well-being, as determined by a physician, physician assistant, or advanced practice registered nurse.

The bill requires school boards to adopt a local policy to implement the bill’s requirements. The policy must cover (1) the bill’s personal device ban and exceptions, (2) device storage, and (3) discipline for violations. When developing a plan, the board must consider the unique needs of teachers, administrators, parents, guardians, and students.

The bill also bans school boards from using social media as the only way they communicate with students and their parents or guardians. Social media refers to any electronic medium where users create and view user-generated content (such as videos, photos, blogs, or instant messages).

Lastly, it makes technical and conforming changes, including eliminating a provision in existing law allowing school boards to restrict

cell phone use in their schools.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

BACKGROUND

HB 5035, favorably reported by the Education Committee, similarly bans students from using wireless communication devices during the school day.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 30 Nay 16 (03/16/2026)