

## **SB 5 Phone-Free Schools**

### **Background and Arguments for Support/Opposition**

The average age for a child to have a smartphone in Pennsylvania is reportedly 10.5 years old. Between 2010-2015, U.S. teens with smartphones rose from 23% to 73%. Teens spend an average of nearly eight hours a day on their phones and receive an average of 237 notifications per day. As of July 2025, 27 states restrict these devices in schools.

#### **Supportive Arguments**

- Each year, more and more studies are showing the negative impact of smartphones on the development of children.
- Data shows a steep decline in mental health in children between 2010-2019 where rates of depression and anxiety rose 50%, the suicide rate for adolescents ages 10-19 rose 48%, while the suicide rates for girls ages 10-14 rose 131%.
- A study published in July 2025 by the Journal of Human Development and Capabilities found that children who receive smartphones before the age of 13 were significantly more likely to experience serious mental health problems in early adulthood, including aggression, emotional instability, and suicidal thoughts.
- Phones are not only a distraction for the owner of the phone, but for the entire class.
- A PEW Research Center study found that 72% of U.S. high school teachers say cell phone distraction is a major problem in the classroom, and a 2024 poll from the National Education Association showed 90% of teachers support prohibiting the use of phones during instructional time and 75% support a bell-to-bell ban.

#### **Opposition Arguments**

- A bell-to-bell ban is too restrictive, and students should be allowed to use cell phones during noninstructional times.
- Cell phone bans prevent vital communication during emergencies, whether an intruder enters the building, or they are suffering a panic attack, and students should be able to easily and immediately contact emergency services and/or their parents during these times if needed.
- Rather than imposing a school-wide ban, each individual teacher should set manageable classroom expectations that work with their instructional style.
- We need to teach students how to use cell phones and when to use them responsibly.
- Shielding students from new and innovative technology can put them at a disadvantage.