

HOUSE BILL 525

F1

(6lr0765)

ENROLLED BILL

— *Ways and Means/ Education, Energy, and the Environment* —

Introduced by **Delegates Boafu, Wu, Wolek, Kaufman, Moreno, Schindler, Solomon, and Taylor Taylor, Ebersole, Griffith, Hartman, Hornberger, R. Long, Mireku-North, Patterson, Vogel, and Wims**

Read and Examined by Proofreaders:

Proofreader.

Proofreader.

Sealed with the Great Seal and presented to the Governor, for his approval this _____ day of _____ at _____ o'clock, _____ M.

Speaker.

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **County Boards of Education – Student Electronic Communication Device Use**
3 **Policy – Establishment**
4 ~~**(Maryland Phone-Free Schools Act)**~~
5 ***(Joanne C. Benson Maryland Phone-Free Schools Act)***

6 FOR the purpose of requiring each county board of education to develop and implement,
7 not later than a certain school year, a policy ~~limiting~~ prohibiting the use of an
8 electronic communication device by a student during the school day except under
9 certain circumstances; and generally relating to county boards of education and a
10 student electronic communication device use policy.

11 BY adding to
12 Article – Education

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.

Italics indicate opposite chamber/conference committee amendments.



1 Section 7–137
 2 Annotated Code of Maryland
 3 (2025 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

4 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
 5 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

6 **Article – Education**

7 **7–137.**

8 (A) (1) IN THIS SECTION THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS
 9 INDICATED.

10 (2) “ACADEMIC SCHOOL DAY” MEANS ANY STRUCTURED OR
 11 UNSTRUCTURED LEARNING EXPERIENCE THAT OCCURS FROM WHEN THE FIRST
 12 BELL RINGS AT THE START OF THE SCHOOL DAY UNTIL THE DISMISSAL BELL RINGS
 13 AT THE END OF THE SCHOOL DAY, INCLUDING INSTRUCTIONAL PERIODS, LUNCH,
 14 RECESS, PASSING PERIODS, AND TRANSITIONAL PERIODS.

15 (3) (I) “ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICE” MEANS ANY
 16 PORTABLE ELECTRONIC DEVICE CARRIED OR TRANSPORTED BY A STUDENT TO
 17 RECEIVE, SEND, OR RECORD VOICE, IMAGE, OR TEXT CONTENT, INCLUDING CELL
 18 PHONES, TABLETS, LAPTOPS, SMART WATCHES, WIRELESS EARBUDS OR
 19 HEADPHONES, GEOLOCATION DEVICES, AND ANY OTHER DEVICE WITH
 20 COMMUNICATION FUNCTIONS.

21 (II) “ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICE” DOES NOT
 22 INCLUDE AN ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICE PROVIDED BY A COUNTY BOARD
 23 FOR INSTRUCTIONAL PURPOSES.

24 (4) “SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM” MEANS AN INTERNET-BASED
 25 APPLICATION, WEBSITE, OR DIGITAL SERVICE THAT ENABLES USERS TO CREATE,
 26 SHARE, OR VIEW CONTENT OR TO INTERACT WITH OTHER USERS THROUGH
 27 PROFILES, ACCOUNTS, FEEDS, MESSAGING, COMMENTS, REACTIONS, OR SIMILAR
 28 SOCIAL FEATURES, AND THAT IS PRIMARILY DESIGNED TO FACILITATE SOCIAL
 29 INTERACTION, USER-GENERATED CONTENT, OR CONTENT DISTRIBUTION TO A
 30 BROAD OR SEMI-PUBLIC AUDIENCE.

31 ~~(4) (5) “STORE” MEANS TO SECURE IN A MANNER DETERMINED BY~~
 32 ~~THE COUNTY BOARD TO ENSURE THE ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICE IS NOT~~
 33 ~~CARRIED ON THE STUDENT’S PERSON DURING THE ACADEMIC SCHOOL DAY.~~

1 **(B) THIS SECTION DOES NOT APPLY TO THE MARYLAND SCHOOL FOR THE**
2 **BLIND OR THE MARYLAND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF.**

3 ~~(B)~~ **(C)** NOT LATER THAN THE 2027–2028 SCHOOL YEAR, EACH COUNTY
4 BOARD SHALL DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A POLICY TO ~~LIMIT~~ **PROHIBIT** THE USE OF
5 ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICES BY STUDENTS DURING THE ACADEMIC
6 SCHOOL DAY.

7 ~~(C)~~ **(D)** EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN SUBSECTION ~~(D)~~ **(E)** OF THIS SECTION,
8 THE POLICY DEVELOPED UNDER THIS SECTION SHALL:

9 **(1) PROHIBIT A STUDENT FROM USING AN ELECTRONIC**
10 **COMMUNICATION DEVICE DURING THE ACADEMIC SCHOOL DAY;**

11 **(2) REQUIRE A STUDENT TO STORE THE STUDENT’S ELECTRONIC**
12 **COMMUNICATION DEVICE DURING THE ACADEMIC SCHOOL DAY;**

13 **(3) PROHIBIT A STUDENT FROM USING THE SOCIAL MEDIA**
14 **APPLICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA WEBSITES DETERMINED BY THE COUNTY BOARD**
15 **ACCESSING OR USING A SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM DURING THE ACADEMIC SCHOOL**
16 **DAY; AND**

17 **(4) REQUIRE ADMINISTRATOR APPROVAL FOR THE USE OF A**
18 **PERSONAL ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICE FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES**
19 **WHEN A SCHOOL–ISSUED ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICE IS UNAVAILABLE.**

20 ~~(D)~~ **(E)** THE POLICY DEVELOPED UNDER THIS SECTION MAY NOT
21 PROHIBIT A STUDENT FROM USING AN ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICE:

22 **(1) FOR A STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY, FOR REASONABLE**
23 **ACCOMMODATIONS RELATED TO A DISABILITY, INCLUDING FOR ANY PURPOSE**
24 **DOCUMENTED** IN THE STUDENT’S INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM OR 504
25 PLAN;

26 **(2) TO MONITOR OR ADDRESS A STUDENT’S DOCUMENTED HEALTH**
27 **ISSUE;**

28 ~~(3)~~ **DURING AN EMERGENCY EVENT, IF EXPRESSLY AUTHORIZED BY**
29 **AN ADMINISTRATOR;**

30 ~~(4)~~ ~~(3)~~ **WHEN DIRECTED BY AN ADMINISTRATOR FOR**
31 **EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES INSTRUCTOR TO BE USED AS PART OF A LESSON;**

1 ~~(5)~~ ~~(4)~~ (3) TO ACCESS LANGUAGE TRANSLATION TOOLS TO ENSURE
 2 EDUCATIONAL EQUITY FOR MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS WHEN SCHOOL-ISSUED
 3 ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICES ARE NOT AVAILABLE OR SUFFICIENT FOR
 4 THIS PURPOSE; OR

5 ~~(6)~~ ~~(5)~~ (4) FOR THE PURPOSE OF MEETING CAREGIVING
 6 RESPONSIBILITIES, AS APPROVED BY A PRINCIPAL.

7 ~~(E)~~ (F) EACH COUNTY BOARD SHALL:

8 (1) ENGAGE PARENTS, STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND COMMUNITY
 9 STAKEHOLDERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND REVISION OF THE POLICY, INCLUDING
 10 DETERMINING ENFORCEMENT OF THE POLICY; AND

11 (2) PUBLISH AND MAKE THE POLICY AVAILABLE IN MULTIPLE
 12 LANGUAGES IN STUDENT HANDBOOKS, ON THE SCHOOL'S AND COUNTY BOARD'S
 13 WEBSITES, AND AT SCHOOL EVENTS.

14 ~~(F)~~ (G) (1) A POLICY DEVELOPED UNDER THIS SECTION SHALL
 15 INCLUDE APPROPRIATE DISCIPLINARY MEASURES FOR VIOLATIONS OF THE POLICY.

16 (2) THE DISCIPLINARY MEASURES ADOPTED UNDER PARAGRAPH (1)
 17 OF THIS SUBSECTION SHALL BE TIERED DISCIPLINARY MEASURES ENFORCED BY AN
 18 ADMINISTRATOR.

19 (3) A DISCIPLINARY MEASURE ADOPTED UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF
 20 THIS SUBSECTION MAY NOT INCLUDE SUSPENSION OR EXPULSION SOLELY FOR A
 21 VIOLATION OF THE POLICY.

22 ~~(G)~~ (H) ON OR BEFORE SEPTEMBER 1, 2027, ~~AND EACH SEPTEMBER 1~~
 23 ~~UNTIL SEPTEMBER 1, 2032,~~ EACH COUNTY BOARD SHALL SUBMIT ~~A REPORT~~ TO THE
 24 DEPARTMENT ~~ON THE IMPACTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION~~ A COPY OF THE
 25 ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICE POLICY IN THE LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM
 26 IMPLEMENTED UNDER THIS SECTION, INCLUDING:

27 (1) ~~A COPY OF THE CURRENT ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICE~~
 28 ~~POLICY THAT DESCRIBES:~~ DESCRIPTION OF THE POLICY'S:

29 (i) STORAGE AND SECURITY REQUIREMENTS AND ANY
 30 RELATED GRADE-LEVEL DIFFERENTIATIONS ESTABLISHED IN THE POLICY;

1 (II) ~~GRADE-LEVEL DIFFERENTIATION~~ DISCIPLINE MEASURES
 2 AND ANY RELATED GRADE-LEVEL DIFFERENTIATIONS ESTABLISHED IN THE
 3 POLICY;

4 (III) INSTRUCTIONAL USE PROTOCOLS; AND

5 (IV) EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION PLANS; AND

6 (2) DOCUMENTATION OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT; IN THE
 7 DEVELOPMENT OF THE POLICY.

8 ~~(3) COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT DATA, INCLUDING:~~

9 ~~(I) RELATED DISCIPLINARY REFERRALS, DISAGGREGATED BY~~
 10 ~~STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC SUBGROUPS; AND~~

11 ~~(II) THE USE OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES AS A DISCIPLINARY~~
 12 ~~MEASURE, IF USED;~~

13 ~~(4) DESCRIPTION OF THE IMPACTS ON THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT,~~
 14 ~~IF ANY, INCLUDING SURVEY DATA FROM STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND PARENTS ON~~
 15 ~~FOCUS, WELL-BEING, AND SATISFACTION FOLLOWING POLICY IMPLEMENTATION;~~

16 ~~(5) EQUITY AND ACCOMMODATION DATA, INCLUDING THE NUMBER~~
 17 ~~AND TYPE OF EXEMPTIONS TO THE POLICY GRANTED BY A SCHOOL; AND~~

18 ~~(6) ANTICIPATED POLICY REVISIONS FOR THE UPCOMING SCHOOL~~
 19 ~~YEAR, IF ANY.~~

20 ~~(H) (I)~~ ON OR BEFORE ~~JULY~~ DECEMBER 1, 2028, AND EACH JULY 1
 21 UNTIL JULY 1, 2033, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL PUBLISH ON THE DEPARTMENT'S
 22 WEBSITE A REPORT THAT COMPILES ~~AND SUMMARIZES THE REPORTS OF THE~~
 23 ~~COUNTY BOARDS ON THE IMPACTS OF IMPLEMENTING THE~~ ELECTRONIC
 24 COMMUNICATION DEVICE POLICIES OF EACH COUNTY BOARD SUBMITTED TO THE
 25 DEPARTMENT UNDER SUBSECTION (G) (H) OF THIS SECTION, INCLUDING:

26 ~~(1) THE DATA SUBMITTED BY THE COUNTY BOARDS TO THE~~
 27 ~~DEPARTMENT;~~

28 ~~(2) ENFORCEMENT CHALLENGES; AND~~

29 ~~(3) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND MODEL POLICIES.~~

1 ~~(H)~~ (J) (1) EACH COUNTY BOARD SHALL SEND TO THE DEPARTMENT
2 AN UPDATED COPY OF THE ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICE POLICY
3 DEVELOPED AND IMPLEMENTED UNDER THIS SECTION.

4 (2) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL PUBLISH ON ITS WEBSITE A COPY OF
5 EACH COUNTY BOARD'S ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICE POLICY SUBMITTED
6 UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION.

7 ~~(H)~~ (K) (1) ON OR BEFORE JULY 30, 2028, AND EACH JULY 30 UNTIL
8 JULY 30, 2033, EACH COUNTY BOARD SHALL SUBMIT A REPORT TO THE
9 DEPARTMENT ON THE IMPACTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ELECTRONIC
10 COMMUNICATION DEVICE POLICY, INCLUDING:

11 (I) COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT DATA, INCLUDING
12 RELATED DISCIPLINARY REFERRALS DISAGGREGATED BY STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC
13 SUBGROUPS; AND

14 (II) EQUITY AND ACCOMMODATION DATA, INCLUDING THE
15 NUMBER AND TYPES OF EXEMPTIONS TO THE POLICY GRANTED BY SCHOOLS IN THE
16 COUNTY.

17 (2) THE DEPARTMENT, IN CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL SCHOOL
18 SYSTEMS, SHALL DETERMINE THE BEST METHOD TO SUBMIT THE INFORMATION
19 REQUIRED UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION TO THE DEPARTMENT,
20 INCLUDING WITHIN EXISTING REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.

21 ~~(K)~~ (L) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ADOPT REGULATIONS TO IMPLEMENT
22 THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS SECTION.

23 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
24 1, 2026.

Approved:

Governor.

Speaker of the House of Delegates.

President of the Senate.