

JAN 23 2025

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO WIRELESS COMMUNICATION DEVICES IN SCHOOLS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature recognizes there is widespread
2 use of wireless communication devices, including mobile phones
3 and smart technology, in public schools across the State. While
4 these devices offer benefits such as facilitating communication
5 and providing access to educational resources, they have also
6 led to increasing distractions during instructional time that
7 can negatively impact students' academic performance and focus.
8 Studies have shown that excessive use of wireless communication
9 devices, particularly for non-academic purposes such as social
10 media, contributes to mental health issues, including stress,
11 anxiety, and sleep deprivation, further hindering students'
12 ability to learn and develop socially.

13 The legislature finds that nationally, approximately eighty
14 per cent of schools have implemented policies prohibiting the
15 use of wireless communication devices for non-academic purposes
16 during school hours, signaling a broad consensus on the need for
17 such regulations. Several states, including Florida, Louisiana,



1 South Carolina, Virginia, and California, have adopted or
2 proposed policies to limit or restrict cellphone use in schools.
3 These policies reflect an effort to balance students' need for
4 access to technology during emergencies with the goal of
5 fostering a focused, distraction-free academic environment.

6 The legislature also finds that establishing guidelines for
7 responsible technology use and promoting digital citizenship
8 will support the academic success and mental well-being of
9 students. The legislature believes it is imperative that the
10 State create a balance between maintaining access to wireless
11 communication devices for safety and communication purposes, and
12 promoting a healthier and more effective learning environment.

13 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to regulate the use
14 of wireless communication devices in the State's schools,
15 ensuring that students can still access their devices in
16 emergencies while minimizing distractions in the classroom.

17 SECTION 2. Chapter 302A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
18 amended by adding a new section to part II, subpart C, to be
19 appropriately designated and to read as follows:

20 "§302A- Wireless communication device policy;
21 prohibition; exceptions. (a) Beginning with the 2025-2026



1 school year, each public school shall adopt and implement a
2 wireless communication device policy that prohibits students
3 from using wireless communication devices while in school during
4 student hours and exempts from the policy the use of a wireless
5 communication device:

6 (1) For educational purposes authorized by a teacher;

7 (2) If an emergency occurs;

8 (3) To manage a student's health care;

9 (4) In accordance with a student's individualized
10 education program; and

11 (5) In accordance with a plan developed under section 504
12 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973
13 (29 U.S.C. 794).

14 (b) Each school shall publish on its website the wireless
15 communication device policy established under subsection (a).

16 (c) For the purposes of this section:

17 "Student hours" means the hours of the school year counted
18 for purposes of section 302A-251; provided that "student hours"
19 for public charter schools and multi-track public schools shall
20 mean the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., unless otherwise



1 defined by the wireless communication device policy of the
2 applicable public charter school or multi-track public school.

3 "Wireless communication device" means any portable wireless
4 device that has the capability to provide voice, messaging, or
5 other data communication between two or more parties, including
6 a cellular telephone, tablet computer, laptop computer,
7 smartwatch, or gaming device."

8 SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.

9 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

10 INTRODUCED BY: 



S.B. NO. 1544

Report Title:

DOE; Cellular Phones; Wireless Communication Devices;
Prohibition

Description:

Requires each public school to implement a policy to prohibit students from using cellular phones and other wireless communication devices during school hours, subject to exceptions for education, health, and emergencies.

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