

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR



ROY M. TAKUMI  
CHAIRPERSON

**STATE OF HAWAII  
BOARD OF EDUCATION  
PAPA HO'ONA'AUAO**  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

**House Committee on Education**  
**Thursday, February 12, 2026**  
2:00 p.m.  
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 309

**Measure: House Bill 2563, Relating to Education**

**Purpose of Measure:**

Requires the Board of Education to adopt a policy that bans the use of phones and related devices by students during school hours, except for instructional purposes, to begin in the 2027-2028 school year.

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee:

The Board of Education (Board) appreciates the Legislature's concern regarding cellphone use in our schools, and respectfully offers comments on House Bill 2563.

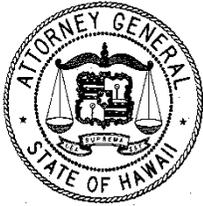
The Board has been keenly interested in this subject, and has been proactively working to consider the best approach to policy, gathering input from stakeholders and the community, meeting with Department of Education personnel and others to better understand policy efforts in this area, and studying various approaches within and outside of the Department and the state.

As a result of this work, the Board currently has a policy regarding student cell phone use in the schools agenda'd for its February 12th meeting, for final approval. The policy is a unified approach that reflects students' developmental readiness and maturity and aligns with current Board policy related to technology use and instruction. It will help establish clear expectations at each school level.

The policy is intended to balance the benefits to student learning and engagement with the challenges posed by unregulated use, which can lead to learning disruption and impact student well-being.

In setting minimum requirements and possible exceptions to those requirements, the Board aims to provide the Department and schools with the flexibility necessary to respond to each local school context and students' developmental readiness, while also acknowledging parents' concerns around their students' safety. It should be noted that nothing in the policy prohibits the Department from permitting schools to establish more restrictive rules and regulations around the use of cell phones by students.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify on behalf of the Board.



**TESTIMONY OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA  
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026**

---

**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**  
H.B. NO. 2563, RELATING TO EDUCATION.

**BEFORE THE:**  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**DATE:** Thursday, February 12, 2026      **TIME:** 2:00 p.m.

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 309

**TESTIFIER(S):** Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or  
Anne T. Horiuchi, Deputy Attorney General

---

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General (Department) provides the following comments.

This bill requires the Board of Education to adopt a policy prohibiting student use of phones and related devices during school hours, except for instructional purposes, beginning in the 2027-2028 school year.

The Department is concerned that the bill's exception permitting use only for instructional purposes may be too limited. Some students may require access to a phone or related device as an accommodation pursuant to an Individualized Education Program or a Section 504 Plan. The policy should also account for accommodations required under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

To address this concern, the Department recommends revising proposed new section 302A- , Hawaii Revised Statutes, on page 2, lines 14-20, as follows:

The board shall establish a phone-and-related devices-free, bell-to-bell policy for public schools to be implemented beginning with the 2027-2028 school year; provided that phones and related devices may be used for instructional purposes[;], **or pursuant to a student's individualized education program or section 504 plan, or as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (title 42 United States Code, sections 12101 to 12213)**; provided further that the policy may be implemented in phases for each school level.

(Suggested changes Ramseyered against the existing text of the bill and in bold.)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this bill.

**HB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 9:23:59 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry Support

2563 HB RELATING TO EDUCATION.

**HB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 9:33:53 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jacob Wiencek	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

This legislation is sorely needed. We have got to ban phones in school. They are incredibly distracting to students and harmful to their intellectual development. There are reams of research showing the connection between phone use and negative development.

I strongly urge the committee to **SUPPORT** this bill!

**HB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 1:24:37 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
M. Leilani DeMello	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I KĀKO‘O this bill in hopes that students will not be negatively impacted in terms of their ability to communicate with parents. Aside from that, learning while in school during instructional hours is very important and the phone is definitely a distraction.

Mahalo,

M. Leilani DeMello

‘Ōla‘a, Puna, Hawai‘i

To Whom It May Concern:

Banning cellphone use in schools is the simplest way to improve the learning environment in classrooms. I have been working as a substitute teacher at the high school level for the past four years; cellphones are the biggest distraction in the classroom for both teachers and students. Banning cellphones will allow students to better focus on their schoolwork.

There is no valid need for cellphone use in the classroom. If parents need to contact their children during school hours, they can simply call the school office and a message can be quickly relayed to students. Schools are well-equipped to contact both students and parents when necessary. In the event of a school emergency, it is best for everyone if the school communicates one official message rather than have hundreds (or thousands) of students creating confusion with inaccurate information.

A DOE policy would be the simplest and clearest way to successfully implement a ban. It can be confusing for students to comply when schools do not enforce a consistent policy across all classes.

I'm sure most parents would be pleased if their children spent less time online. Banning cellphone use in school is the most logical and beneficial place to start. It would be good practice for students to get used to the fact that cellphone use is sometimes restricted outside of school too. Many jobs do not allow cellphone use while working.

We can easily improve the learning environment in schools at no cost. For the sake of both students and teachers, vote "Yes" to ban cellphone use in schools.

Sincerely,  
Michael Higa

**HB-2563**

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 12:50:17 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/12/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
An Vo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Education Committee.

My name is An and I'm a public health student on O'ahu. I'm testifying in strong support of HB2563.

I watched videos on YouTube that talked about how high schoolers today can't read a book from front-to-back. Elementary schoolers also ChatGPT'd their essay. When students were caught, they prefer to ask how much it would impact their grade if they skipped the essay, meaning that they would choose to not do the essay over legitimately writing the essay. In college, all my classmates use laptops and play games during a lecture. I'm the only one to use paper and pen to take notes like how I did in high school. After I graduated, one of my teachers created a system where they would collect students' phones before class started when it was not a problem for my class.

Phones should be used as a learning tool only when the teacher says so, as well as for calling family for emergencies. Phones should not be used to distract students from taking opportunities to learn in real life.

Please support HB2563.

Mahalo nui loa,  
An  
Honolulu, HI