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OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

Office of Research
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Office

S.B. 158
136th General Assembly

Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

[Click here for S.B. 158's Bill Analysis](#)

Version: As Reported by Senate Education

Primary Sponsor: Sen. Timken

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: No

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Highlights

- The bill may minimally increase administrative costs to school districts and other public schools to update their policies to prohibit cellphone use during instructional hours.

Detailed Analysis

Current law enacted in H.B. 250 of the 135th General Assembly requires public schools to adopt, by July 1, 2025, a policy governing the use of cellphones by students during school hours that (1) emphasizes that student use be as limited as possible during school hours and (2) reduces use-related distractions in classroom settings. The bill requires school districts, community schools, and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) schools to adopt a policy prohibiting the use of cellphones by students during instructional hours beginning September 1, 2025.¹ However, the bill continues to allow students to use cellphones or other electronic communications devices for student learning or to monitor or address a health concern if (1) a district or school deems it appropriate, (2) such use is included in a student's individualized education program (IEP) or section 504 plan, or (3) the district or school receives a written statement from the student's physician requiring such use. The bill also suspends the cellphone prohibition during an active threat or emergency if permitted under the building's comprehensive emergency management plan and requires public school administrators to include in those plans a protocol addressing student use of cellphones during such an event.

¹ The bill's requirements also apply to college-preparatory boarding schools. However, none of these schools currently operate in Ohio.

According to a December 2024 survey of district and school cellphone policies by the Department of Education and Workforce (DEW), out of a total of 992 local education agencies (LEAs) that responded, 410 (41%) have already adopted policies disallowing cellphone use during standard school hours.² Another 442 LEAs (45%) limit cellphone use to selected times of the school day (such as during lunch or between classes), while the remaining 140 LEAs (14%) have not yet determined the extent of cellphone restrictions. Districts and schools that have not yet adopted a policy disallowing all cellphone use during school hours may incur minimal administrative costs to develop and implement a policy, update their website, and otherwise make the policy publicly available.

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² See DEW's [Cell Phone Policy Adoption and Implementation Survey \(PDF\)](#), which is available on DEW's website: education.ohio.gov.