



PENNSYLVANIA PRINCIPALS ASSOCIATION

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PA Principals Association Position Statement on Senate Bill 1014 – Bell-to-Bell Phone-Free Policy

The Pennsylvania Principals Association appreciates the State Senate’s focus on student well-being, school climate, and uninterrupted instructional time reflected in Senate Bill 1014, which would require all school entities to adopt a bell-to-bell phone-free policy by the 2026–27 school year. **At this point, we can neither support nor oppose the bill in its current form.**

Our members—representing elementary, middle, and high schools across the Commonwealth—are united in their concern about the impact of smartphones and social media on student learning, mental health, and school safety. Many schools have already implemented significant restrictions on personal devices, and several principals report substantial improvements in student engagement, relationships, and behavior when phones are removed from the learning environment.

At the same time, member feedback on SB 1014 reveals important differences in context and perspective:

- Some leaders believe a full-day ban is the only truly effective and equitable solution, reducing distraction, social-media-driven misconduct, and the burden on teachers who must otherwise police a patchwork of rules.
- Others—especially in complex high school environments with dual enrollment, CTC, internships, and flexible scheduling—are concerned that a state-mandated bell-to-bell ban will be difficult to implement without significant resources and may generate more conflict over enforcement than it resolves.
- Concern exists among members about the impact of the exceptions for IEP, medical, and 504 students. Not only could it stigmatize these individuals, but it could also overwhelm our health care and mental health professionals with increased referrals so that students can obtain such exceptions.
- Of equal concern, one member brought up the significance of the Safe2Say program and the important part students’ abilities to provide anonymous tips. SB 1014 in its current fashion will restrict students from accessing Safe2Say during school hours with the potential of devastating results.
- A number of principals express strong reservations about further erosion of local control, noting that many boards and administrative teams have already crafted context-specific, effective policies limiting phones during instructional time.

Based on this feedback, the Pennsylvania Principals Association:

1. Supports the core intent of SB 1014.

We agree that students should not be using personal mobile devices during instructional time and that schools need clear backing to limit or prohibit student phone use during the school day to protect learning, mental health, and safety.

2. Urges the General Assembly to preserve meaningful local flexibility within the statewide framework.

We recommend clarifying language that affirms local authority to design implementation models, and that allows reasonable flexibility where a district can demonstrate an effective instructional-time-only phone-free model, particularly in complex high school settings.

3. Supports and seeks strengthening of the bill's exception language and protections.

We recommend clear guidance to ensure that students with medical or disability-related accommodations are not stigmatized and healthcare and mental health professionals are not unduly burdened. It is also important that there is alignment with existing safety and technology policies so that necessary communication avenues remain intact.

4. Calls for state support and resources for implementation.

Implementation of a bell-to-bell phone-free policy will require additional staff time, professional learning for consistent enforcement, and potential purchase of storage solutions. We urge the General Assembly to pair this mandate with targeted funding and technical assistance. By not doing so, this will equate to yet another unfunded mandate.

Principals should have a formal role in designing implementation guidance, identifying appropriate metrics, and sharing best practices from districts that have already implemented phone-free approaches.

In summary, the Pennsylvania Principals Association supports strong, evidence-based efforts to reduce the negative impact of smartphones and social media on students. We are prepared to work with legislators to refine SB 1014 so that it protects learning and mental health, respects local context and local control, safeguards students with medical and disability-related needs, and provides districts with the resources and flexibility required for successful implementation.

We stand ready to collaborate with the General Assembly, PDE, and partner organizations to ensure that any statewide phone-free policy truly advances the academic, social, and emotional well-being of Pennsylvania's students.