

HCS HBs 408, 306 & 854 -- TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVICES IN SCHOOL

SPONSOR: Gragg

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 20 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Legislative by a vote of 6 to 3 with 1 voting present.

This bill will require school districts to adopt a written policy on electronic telecommunication devices beginning in the 2026-27 school year. The requirements of the policy are specified and include prohibiting student use of an "electronic personal communications device" as defined in the bill, during regularly scheduled instructional activities unless authorized by the school principal. Exceptions are provided for students with documented needs and for health purposes.

The policy may provide guidelines and requirements for electronic telecommunication devices during emergencies, educational purposes, and non-instructional school activities, including school-sponsored field trips and during transportation.

Districts and charter schools must publish the policy upon demand and the bill specifies liability protections for acting in accordance with the policy.

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that social media is distractive and creates learning and social issues within the school. Parents want to ensure students are learning and minimize distractions. Providing a clear policy for cell phone use is a way to ensure that students can return to the classroom and engage.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Gragg; Missouri State Teachers Association; and Arnie Dienoff.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say clarity on the definitions would be helpful and providing details on what constitutes instruction time is important.

Testifying in person on the bill was Missouri School Boards' Association.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.