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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS

Introduced By: Senators Murray, Thompson, DiPalma, Acosta, and Urso

Date Introduced: March 14, 2025

Referred To: Senate Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1           SECTION 1. Chapter 16-21 of the General Laws entitled "Health and Safety of Pupils" is  
2 hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

3           **16-21-43. Policy on use of personal electronic devices in schools.**

4           (a)(1) Each public school shall have a policy regarding the use of personal electronic  
5 devices on school grounds and during school-sponsored activities to reduce distractions, maintain  
6 environments focused on learning and protect the privacy and safety of students and staff. Each  
7 public school shall notify the parents or guardians of all students attending the school of the policy.  
8 The policy shall include, but not be limited to, a prohibition on physical access to a personal  
9 electronic device by students during the school day as defined by the department of education and  
10 the commission of elementary and secondary education pursuant to §§ 16-2-2 and 16-2-9 and any  
11 regulations promulgated thereunder including, but not limited to, 200-RICR-20-05-1.

12           (2) The district shall make exceptions for student personal device use that provide access  
13 to assistive technology necessary to comply with individualized student 504 plans, individualized  
14 education plans (IEP), medical needs such as glucose monitoring, and/or a plan to support emergent  
15 multilingual learners (MLL) students with appropriate language access programs and services to  
16 ensure the provision of appropriate, meaningful public education. The allowable exceptions shall  
17 be written into the student's identified plan and approved by the appropriate team or coordinator.

18           (3) Students provided an exception to this policy shall not be segregated from students  
19 without such exception. Exceptions shall also be made in the event of an emergency.

1           **(b) For the purposes of this section, a “personal electronic device” means a smartphone,**  
2 **mobile phone, tablet, computer, smartwatch or other electronic device not owned or provided to a**  
3 **student by a public school that is capable of communication through the Internet or a wireless**  
4 **network.**

5           **(c) The policy and any standards and rules enforcing the policy shall be prescribed by the**  
6 **school committee in conjunction with the superintendent or the board of trustees of a charter school**  
7 **and in consultation with any collective bargaining agents that represent school staff. The policy**  
8 **shall be enforced consistently by school administration, be systematic in nature, and should**  
9 **minimize the potential for conflict between students, parents, educators, and staff.**

10           **(d) The department of elementary and secondary education shall, in consultation with the**  
11 **attorney general’s office and the department of public health, provide guidance and**  
12 **recommendations to assist schools with developing and implementing effective policies regarding**  
13 **the use of personal electronic devices on school grounds and during school-sponsored activities**  
14 **consistent with this section and shall make such guidance and recommendations publicly available**  
15 **on the department's website. Guidance and recommendations shall be reviewed annually and**  
16 **regularly updated to reflect applicable research and best practices.**

17           **(e) Each school district and charter school shall file its school personal electronic device**  
18 **use policy with the department of elementary and secondary education in a manner and form**  
19 **prescribed by the department.**

20           SECTION 2. This act shall take effect on August 1, 2026.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO EDUCATION -- HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS

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1           This act would require every public school district to have a policy regarding the use of  
2 personal electronic devices on school grounds and during school-sponsored activities to reduce  
3 distractions and maintain environments focused on learning. The act would also enable school  
4 districts to make exceptions to the policy.

5           This act would take effect on August 1, 2026.

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