

2025 -- S 0771 SUBSTITUTE A

LC001681/SUB A

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

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) No school official, employee, or agent of the school shall search the contents of any**
11 **personal electronic device covered by this chapter that is retained by the school during school hours**
12 **and not in the students possession in a locked pouch or container.**

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

20 **(f) Each school district and charter school shall file its school personal electronic device**
21 **use policy with the department of elementary and secondary education in a manner and form**
22 **prescribed by the department.**

23 **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

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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