Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts on HSB 106. I am a mother of 2 teen children and am an active advocate in the Screens in Schools space participating with other non-profits and foundations working on an educational movement to enable our future generation the opportunity for a distraction free educational experience.

I encourage deliberation to take this bill further by expanding scope to include bell to bell language as outlined with a model bill on the Becca Schmill Foundation for phone and social media free schools. It is nearly impossible for a student to resist the addictive algorithms when the phone and/or device is on their person. This places the burden of management back onto our teachers, who are there to provide an education for students.

Studies have found that:

- 97% of students average 43 minutes of use during the school day
- Those 43 minutes are spent on social media, YouTube and gaming
- One third of teens report being exposed to pornography while at school
- 35% of teens admit to using their phones to cheat
- 65% of student's self-report to being distracted by digital devices in class
- 72% of US High School teachers say cell phone distraction is a major problem in the classroom according to Pew Research Center

All this research is further backed up by the 2017 Brain Drain Study which found:

- The mere present of a cell phone, even when it is silent and stored out of sight, reduces cognitive capacity
- Students performed best when the phone was in a separate room
- All the above points were important when taking a test, but even MORE profound when learning new concepts, which is the majority state of mind our students should be in during their school day

Teachers want personal electronic devices out of the classroom as well. In 2024, the National Education Association conducted a poll that identified:

- 83% of the members support prohibiting cell phones and personal device use during the entire school day, from the first bell to the last bell.
- Over 90% of educators feel students' mental health is a serious issue at their school and a majority say there has been a significant increase in concerns related to student mental health in the past few years

And here is why:

- 95% of teenagers are on social media. This includes 40% of 8-12 year olds
- On average, teens spend nearly 5 hours per day on social media apps
- According to the American Psychological Association, when teens spend more than 3 hours per day on social media, their risk of poor mental health DOUBLES. Meaning they are twice as likely to become depressed, anxious and beyond

- The US Surgeon General issued an Advisory on Social Media and Youth Mental Health stating, "Schools should ensure that classroom learning and social time are phone-free experiences."

I appreciate the bill's effort to address these screen-based concerns in our schools across the state. I would like the bill to clearly state the definition of non-medically necessary personal electronic devices:

- All cell phones
    - Smart phones
    - Brick phones (non-internet connected interfaces)
- Smartwatches
- Fitness Trackers
- Bluetooth connected devices

In addition, I would appreciate consideration of addressing broader concerns and/or options for those wanting less screen-based learning in schools outside of technology classes where appropriate use of screen-based products is necessary. Parents should be given the opportunity to "Opt in" for those who want screens and for those wanting a more embodied, teacher/peer/paper/writing learning experience an option to "Opt out" of the screen-based devices. We should have a voice in who, how and what data is being shared with application vendors and 3rd party data brokers. Please reference the latest news on the PowerSchool data breach currently estimated at 64 million student data records and 9.4 million teacher records. Current reports suggest that this data includes, but is not limited to, critically sensitive data like medical information, disciplinary information, legal custody and more.

In closing, I would like to express gratitude to the individuals working on this important legislation. I am grateful for the opportunity to express ideas and concerns. Additionally, I am happy to provide any research and data to the committee that would assist on decision making of this critical issue for our students' sake. I look forward to continuing collaboration to make our children's school days engaging and productive; our future depends upon it.