SENATE DOCKET, NO. 1482 FILED ON: 1/16/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 461

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

John C. Velis

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act to protect children's learning, focus, and emotional health during school hours.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
John C. Velis	*Hampden and Hampshire*	
Carmine Lawrence Gentile	*13th Middlesex*	*1/31/2025*
James C. Arena-DeRosa	*8th Middlesex*	*2/11/2025*
Paul R. Feeney	*Bristol and Norfolk*	*2/20/2025*
Lindsay N. Sabadosa	*1st Hampshire*	*2/28/2025*
Mike Connolly	*26th Middlesex*	*3/3/2025*
Joanne M. Comerford	*Hampshire, Franklin and Worcester*	*3/14/2025*

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By Mr. Velis, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 461) of John C. Velis, Carmine Lawrence Gentile, James C. Arena-DeRosa, Paul R. Feeney and other members of the General Court for legislation to prohibit access to personal electronic devices and social media in public schools. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Ninety-Fourth General Court
(2025-2026)

An Act to protect children's learning, focus, and emotional health during school hours.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Chapter 71 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section 99 the following section:-

Section 100. (a) As used in this section, the following words shall, unless the context clearly requires otherwise, have the following meanings:

"Gaming app" a software program that allows users to play games on their mobile devices, tablets, or computers.

"Parent" a parent or guardian of a student who is authorized to make education decisions for the student.

"Personal electronic communication device(s)" any electronic equipment capable of providing voice, messaging, or other data communication between two (2) or more parties or devices, or capable of connecting to a smartphone or other personal electronic device, the

12 internet, or a cellular or Wi-Fi network, including but not limited to smartphones, cellular
13 phones, bluetooth enabled devices, tablets, smartwatches or other wearables, and gaming
14 devices. Personal electronic communication devices do not include school owned devices
15 provided to the student in accordance with the limitations placed herein.

16 "School" any public school, charter school, or vocational-technical school in
17 Massachusetts that provides full-time education programs for any grade from preK-12.

18 "School-related program" any school-sponsored or approved activity, event, or function
19 on or off school premises where students are under the jurisdiction of the School District or
20 during any period when school employees are supervising students on behalf of the School
21 District.

22 "Social media" any public-facing website, online service, online application, mobile
23 application, or gaming application, used primarily for the purpose of posting and viewing user-
24 generated content. For the purposes of this section, social media does not include: (i) an online
25 website, application, or mobile application where the exclusive function is e-mail or direct
26 messaging shared only between the sender and intended recipients, without displaying or posting
27 publicly or to other users not specifically identified as the recipients by the sender; (ii) an online
28 website, application, or mobile application where the posting of comments or other interactive
29 functionality is merely incidental to its predominant purpose; or, (iii) a school-sanctioned
30 website, application, or service used for the purpose of publishing student journalism, or school-
31 related news, events, and updates.

32 "Student" an individual currently enrolled or registered at a school as defined under
33 subdivision (d) of this section.

34 (b) Each school board or governing body shall develop, adopt, and ensure
35 implementation of and make available to the department of elementary and secondary education
36 a policy:

37 (1) requiring all personal electronic devices be turned off, securely locked away, and
38 inaccessible to students for the entire school day -- from “first bell to last bell” -- and while under
39 the supervision of an employee of the school district for a school-related program;

40 (i) examples of storage devices include lockable pouches that students cannot unlock,
41 locked phone lockers, pencil pouches, or manila envelopes stored in a secure location.

42 (2) includes enforcement provisions to ensure strict compliance with the policy by
43 students and district employees; and

44 (3) provides that a student may contact their parent or caregiver during the school day if
45 needed by using a telephone made available to the student in a manner and location designated
46 by the district.

47 (c) Districts shall collect data annually to measure the impact of the policy on student
48 behavior, mental health, disciplinary incidents, school attendance, and academic performance.

49 (d) Notwithstanding subsection (b), a student shall not be prohibited from possessing or
50 using a personal electronic device under any of the following circumstances:

51 (1) when a licensed physician determines that the possession or use of a personal
52 electronic device is necessary for the health or well-being of the individual student (such as
53 diabetes monitoring); or

54 (2) when the possession or use of a personal electronic device is required in a student's
55 Individual Education Plan (IEP), or Section 504 Accommodations Plan.

56 (f) To help students avoid coming to rely on social media, school districts, school
57 employees, and volunteers are prohibited from:

58 (1) utilizing social media for communication with students directly or indirectly;

59 (2) allowing students to access social media or gaming apps during school day hours or
60 while on school property under the supervision of a school employee;

61 (3) allowing students to access social media on school-issued electronic devices. School-
62 issued devices shall be set up to block social media sites; and

63 (4) utilizing social media to communicate with students about out-of-school sports,
64 extracurricular clubs, and any other school-sponsored activities. This does not prevent a school
65 from using social media for community communication and school-to-parent/guardian
66 communication.

67 This prohibition does not apply to work that requires shared documents, emails, or the
68 use of the Internet for the completion or enhancement of homework assignments, and the
69 electronic submission of assignments.

70 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon enactment.