MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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132nd MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2025

Legislative Document

No. 170

H.P. 103

House of Representatives, January 14, 2025

Resolve, Establishing a Pilot Program to Reduce Personal Electronic Device Distractions During the School Day

Reference to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs suggested and ordered printed.

ROBERT B. HUNT

R(+ B. Hunt

Clerk

Presented by Representative MATHIESON of Kittery. Cosponsored by Senator BRENNER of Cumberland and Representatives: KUHN of Falmouth, SARGENT of York. Sec. 1. Pilot program; application process. Resolved: That the Department of Education, referred to in this resolve as "the department," shall establish a pilot program to reduce student use of personal electronic devices during the school day by awarding one-time funding to one or more school administrative units for the cost of implementing during the 2026-2027 school year a policy that requires all student personal electronic devices to be turned off, securely locked away and inaccessible to students for the duration of the school day. The total funding for the pilot program may not exceed \$250,000. The department shall develop an application process and provide minimum standards for a personal electronic device policy, a description of eligible uses of pilot program funding, a list of preapproved, evidence-based technology solutions that includes but is not limited to cellular telephone pouches, a description of data that a school administrative unit must report to the department, resources for stakeholder outreach, criteria for prioritizing the awarding of funding and a method for determining the amount of funding a school administrative unit may receive. The department shall begin accepting applications by November 1, 2025 and notify applicants of a decision by April 1, 2026.

Sec. 2. Personal electronic device policy exemptions. Resolved: That a personal electronic device policy developed pursuant to section 1 must include a provision that exempts a student from the personal electronic device policy if a licensed physician determines that the use of a personal electronic device is necessary for the health or wellbeing of the student or if an individualized education plan requires the possession or use of a personal electronic device by the student.

Sec. 3. Maine Education Policy Research Institute; support and evaluation. Resolved: That the Maine Education Policy Research Institute shall support the department in developing an application form for the pilot program under section 1 and provide the department by October 1, 2025 a list of possible evidence-based technology solutions and a pilot program evaluation plan that a school administrative unit participating in the pilot program shall use to collect and report data. The pilot program evaluation plan must include, but is not limited to, changes in school climate or student mental health, behavioral incidences, overall academic performance and teacher, student, administrator and other stakeholder perceptions on the effect of the personal electronic device policy developed pursuant to section 1.

Sec. 4. Reports. Resolved: That the Maine Education Policy Research Institute shall, within existing resources, evaluate the pilot program results based on the data collected pursuant to section 3 and issue a preliminary report no later than November 4, 2026 and a final report no later than December 1, 2027 to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education matters. The joint standing committee may report out a bill to the Second Regular Session of the 133rd Legislature.

SUMMARY

This resolve requires the Department of Education to establish a pilot program to reduce student use of personal electronic devices during the school day by awarding one-time funding to one or more school administrative units for the cost of implementing a policy during the 2026-2027 school year that requires all student personal electronic devices to be turned off, securely locked away and inaccessible to students during the school day. The total amount of funding for the pilot program may not exceed \$250,000.

The resolve also directs the Maine Education Policy Research Institute to support the department in developing an application form and provide the department with a list of possible evidence-based technology solutions and a pilot program evaluation plan. The resolve directs the Maine Education Policy Research Institute to submit a preliminary report by November 4, 2026 and a final report by December 1, 2027 to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education matters.