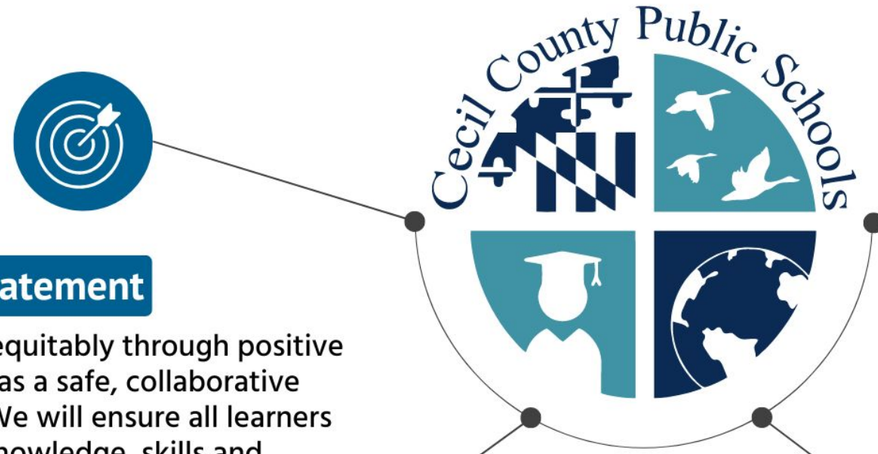
# Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)

## Cell Phones

***October 5, 2026***

# STRATEGIC PLAN

Serving learners, families, and the community.




## Mission Statement

CCPS serves equitably through positive relationships as a safe, collaborative community. We will ensure all learners acquire the knowledge, skills and qualities to be responsible, caring, and ethical citizens.

## Vision Statement

To educate and empower every Cecil County learner through equitable opportunities to build and strengthen our community.

## Our Values

**Equity:** We promote fairness, access, opportunity, and inclusion.

**Integrity:** We build trust through honesty and transparency.

**High Standards:** We meet each learner with expectations for growth and accountability.

**Whole Learner:** We address the academic, behavioral and social-emotional needs for each learner.

**Collaboration:** We work together to strengthen our communities.

## Strategic Themes

Safe Schools

Equitable Rigorous Learning Opportunities

Communication & Engagement

Recruitment & Retention of a High-Quality Workforce

Operational Efficiencies

# Agenda

- ❑ CCPS Portable Electronic (cell phone) Regulation and Practices
- ❑ Steps CCPS has taken to reduce cell phone usage
- ❑ Student Electronic Communication Device Use Policy - Establishment (Joanne C. Benson Maryland Phone-Free Schools Act)
- ❑ Questions and Discussion

# Elementary and Middle School

1. Silent mode during the school day
2. Applies to academic or disciplinary placements beyond the normal instructional day in (i.e., Twilight School, Saturday School, Detentions, Field Trips, etc.).
3. Students take responsibility for the device's safety, security, and maintenance.
4. Wi-Fi access may be restricted as deemed necessary for school operations.
5. No cell phone calls are to be made during the instructional school day.
6. At no times are devices to be out in bathrooms, playgrounds, or locker rooms.
7. Violations are subject to interventions in accordance with the CCPS Code of Student Discipline.

# High School (Same as the Elementary and Middle School except)

1. Students **may** use a personal device only before and after school, during class changes, during breakfast and lunch, and on the school bus.
2. Students **may** be allowed to make a phone call if given permission by supervising school personnel.
3. Students **may** listen to music with one earbud or headphone in one ear at a volume that other people cannot hear. This applies only in the approved settings identified in item number one above.
4. CCPS responsible Use of Technology Policy (Policy IIBH) applies to personal devices while students opt to use them on school property and during school-sanctioned events.

*Students and staff **may** access their personal email, social media, data accounts, and similar applications provided it is done so in accordance with the Responsible Use of Technology Policy (Policy IIBH).*

# What have we done so far?

## Middle School

Yondr Pouches

Lockers

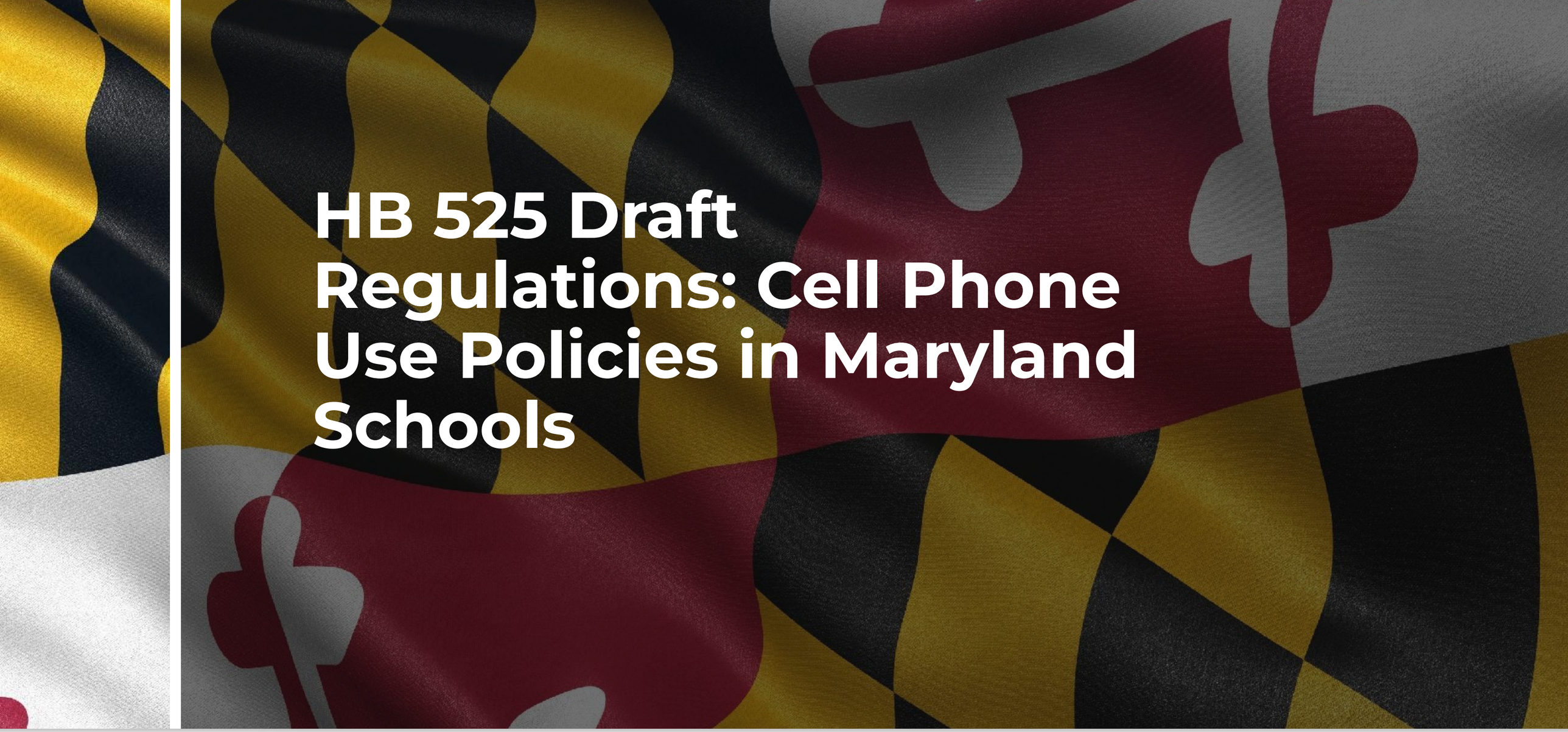
Cell Phone Flowchart

## High School

Cell Phone Hotel

Yondr Pouches

Progressive Discipline



# HB 525 Draft Regulations: Cell Phone Use Policies in Maryland Schools

Presented By |
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Maryland
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

# Requirements of the Joanne C. Benson Maryland Phone-Free Schools Act

In the 2026 legislative session, HB 525, the Joanne C. Benson Maryland Phone-Free Schools Act, was signed into law. This requires county boards of education to implement policies, no later than the **2027–2028 school year**, prohibiting students from using electronic communication devices and accessing social media during the academic school day. ***Includes*** cell phones, laptops, tablets, smart watches, earbuds, headphones, and geolocation devices (excluding board-provided instructional devices).

**Policies must include the following:**

- **Exemptions:** IEP/504 requirements, documented health issues, language translation (if school devices are unavailable), and administrator-approved caregiving responsibilities.
- **Instructional Use:** Administrator approval required for personal devices if school-issued ones are unavailable.
- **Policy Development:** Engagement with parents, students, educators, and community members.
- **Communication:** Multilingual availability in handbooks, on websites, and at school events.
- **Discipline:** Tiered measures enforced by administrators; suspension or expulsion is prohibited solely for policy violations.

**Reporting:**

- **Submission:** Submit policies to MSDE by September 1, 2027, for public posting.
- **Data:** Annually from July 30, 2028, to 2033, report disaggregated disciplinary referrals and exemption data for MSDE publication.

# Additional Areas Addressed by the Proposed Regulations

**Supporting Consistent Local Implementation**

- Clarifying ***"device storage"*** as ***inaccessible to the student,*** consistent with research on reducing distractions and overall efficacy.
- Defines ***caregiving responsibilities*** and standards for approving time-sensitive family care needs.
- Ensures ***searches of stored devices comply*** with existing student search COMAR.
- Requires ***family communication protocols*** for parents to reach students during the day.
- Establishes parameters for ***instructional use*** when school-issued devices are unavailable.
- Integrates ***emergency communication plans*** into the School Emergency Plan.
- Requires local boards to ***review device policies every three years***, including student discipline data, to support equitable implementation.

*Forthcoming MSDE guidance will provide implementation tools and insight, including sample caregiving plans, communication scenarios, and emergency communication plan component*

# Phones in Focus (PIF) Study

- 9,000 Maryland school leaders and educators were surveyed
  - Bell-to-bell restrictions had the highest rate of satisfaction.
  - Stricter phone policies -centralized collection, locker storage, and a ban on phones on campus, had rates of teacher satisfaction.
  - Requiring students to store phones exclusively in lockers - rather than on their person or in Yondr pouches - generated outsized rates of teacher satisfaction.

# Questions
# &
# Discussion