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SENATE BILL DRS35420-NGa-159

Short Title: Screen Free Schools Act.

(Public)

Sponsors: Senators Chitlik and Chaudhuri (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO REQUIRE GOVERNING BODIES OF PUBLIC SCHOOL UNITS TO ADOPT
3 POLICIES RESTRICTING THE USE OF WIRELESS COMMUNICATION DEVICES IN
4 SCHOOLS AND TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR TEACHER ASSISTANTS.

5 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

6 SECTION 1. G.S. 115C-76.25(a) reads as rewritten:

7 "§ 115C-76.25. Parent legal rights for their child's education.

8 (a) Parents have legal rights with regards to their child's education, including the
9 following:

10 ...

11 (13) The right to opt out of being issued a wireless communication device by a
12 school, any requirement that a student take a wireless communication device
13 home with them from school, or use of a wireless communication device for
14 testing or assessments except those assessments issued by the State for
15 compliance with federal law."

16 SECTION 2. G.S. 115C-76.100 reads as rewritten:

17 "§ 115C-76.100. Regulation of wireless communication devices.

18 (a) The following definitions apply in this section:

19 (1) Wireless communication device. – Any portable wireless device that has the
20 capability to provide voice, messaging, or other data communication between
21 two or more parties, including the following:

- 22 a. Cellular telephones.
23 b. Tablet computers.
24 c. Laptop computers.
25 d. Paging devices.
26 e. Two-way radios.
27 f. Gaming devices.

28 (2) Wireless communication policy. – A policy governing the use of wireless
29 communication devices by students.

30 (b) The governing body of a public school unit shall establish a wireless communication
31 policy. At a minimum, except as permitted in subsection (c) of this section, the policy shall
32 prohibit students from using, displaying, or having a wireless communication device turned on
33 during instructional ~~time-time~~ and include at least the following restrictions:

34 (1) For kindergarten through grade five, the following:

- 35 a. Prohibit students from using any wireless communication device in
36 classrooms.



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- 1 b. Require all instruction to be print-based and hands-on.
2 c. To the extent practicable, require all tests and assessments to be
3 conducted using printed materials.
4 (2) For grades six through eight, the following:
5 a. Allow that students may use wireless communication devices that are
6 shared between other students or classrooms. This excludes using their
7 own personal wireless communication device.
8 b. Prohibit schools from issuing wireless communication devices to
9 students.
10 c. Require that any wireless communication device that is owned or
11 contracted for use by a school and used for instructional purposes
12 restrict access to any non-instructional content, including social media
13 platforms and any shared video or media platforms.
14 d. Provide that the total amount of time that a student spends on any
15 wireless communication device during normal school hours shall be
16 less than one hour per school day.
17 e. Require that any wireless communication device owned or contracted
18 for use by a school shall remain on school premises at all times.
19 (3) For grades nine through 12, the following:
20 a. Allow a school to issue wireless communication devices to students
21 individually for instructional purposes.
22 b. Provide that the total amount of time that a student spends on any
23 wireless communication device during normal school hours shall be
24 less than one hour and 30 minutes per school day.
25 c. Require that a student's use of a school-issued wireless communication
26 device is only for instructional purposes.
27 d. Require that any assignments or homework that require the use of a
28 school-issued wireless communication device outside of normal
29 school hours shall not require a student to use such digital device for
30 more than one hour per day to complete the assignments or homework.
31 (c) A wireless communication policy shall allow student use of a wireless communication
32 device during instructional time as follows:
33 (1) If authorized by a teacher for educational purposes or for use in the event of
34 an emergency. The governing body may establish parameters to be followed
35 by a teacher in granting authorizations.
36 (2) As required by the student's individualized education program or section 504
37 (29 U.S.C. § 794) plan.
38 (3) As required to manage a student's health care, in accordance with a
39 documented medical condition.
40 (d) The governing body shall establish the consequences for violations of the wireless
41 communication policy, which may include confiscation of the wireless communication device
42 and disciplinary measures under the public school unit's Code of Student Conduct.
43 (e) No later than September 1 of the year in which this section becomes effective, every
44 public school unit shall send to the Department of Public Instruction a copy of the public school
45 unit's wireless communication policy. The public school unit shall provide the Department of
46 Public Instruction with a copy of the wireless communication policy anytime it is changed. No
47 later than October 1 of each year, the Department of Public Instruction shall report to the Joint
48 Legislative Education Oversight Committee the number of public school units that are in
49 compliance with this section and the name of any public school unit which is not in compliance
50 with this section."

51 **SECTION 3.** G.S. 115C-85 reads as rewritten:

1 **"§ 115C-85. Textbook needs are determined by course of study.**

2 When the State Board of Education has adopted, upon the recommendation of the
3 Superintendent of Public Instruction, a standard course of study at each instructional level in the
4 elementary school and the secondary school, setting forth what subjects shall be taught at each
5 level, it shall proceed to select and adopt textbooks.

6 As used in this part, "textbook" means systematically organized material comprehensive
7 enough to cover the primary objectives outlined in the standard course of study for a grade or
8 course. Formats for textbooks may be print or nonprint, including hardbound books, softbound
9 books, activity-oriented programs, classroom kits, and technology-based programs that require
10 the use of electronic equipment in order to be used in the learning ~~process-process~~, provided that
11 printed materials shall be used in all classrooms for kindergarten through grade eight.

12 Textbooks adopted in accordance with the provisions of this Part shall be used by the public
13 schools of the State except as provided in G.S. 115C-98(b1)."

14 **SECTION 4.(a)** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
15 Public Instruction the sum of nine hundred thirty million dollars (\$930,000,000) in recurring
16 funds beginning with the 2026-2027 fiscal year to be used to allocate one teacher assistant to
17 every classroom serving students in kindergarten through grade five.

18 **SECTION 4.(b)** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
19 Public Instruction the sum of four million three hundred thousand dollars (\$4,300,000) in
20 recurring funds beginning with the 2026-2027 fiscal year to provide grants pursuant to
21 G.S. 115C-269.31.

22 **SECTION 5.** This act is effective when it becomes law.