

Matt MacPherson proposes the following substitute bill:

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School Device Revisions
 2026 GENERAL SESSION
 STATE OF UTAH
Chief Sponsor: Lincoln Fillmore
 House Sponsor: Doug Welton

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LONG TITLE

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General Description:

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This bill establishes the default standard device use from prohibited during instructional time to prohibited during the school day.

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Highlighted Provisions:

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This bill:

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▸ establishes the default standard device use from prohibited during instructional time to

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prohibited during the school day; and

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▸ makes technical and conforming changes.

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Money Appropriated in this Bill:

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None

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Other Special Clauses:

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This bill provides a special effective date.

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Utah Code Sections Affected:

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AMENDS:

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53G-7-227, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2025, First Special Session, Chapter 9

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Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

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Section 1. Section **53G-7-227** is amended to read:

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53G-7-227 . Cellular device prohibition.

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(1) As used in this section:

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(a)(i) "Cellphone" means a handheld, portable electronic device that is designed to be operated using one or both hands and is capable of transmitting and receiving voice, data, or text communication by means of:

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[(i)] (A) a cellular network;

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[(ii)] (B) a satellite network; or

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[(iii)] (C) any other wireless technology.

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- 30 ~~[(b)]~~ (ii) "Cellphone" includes:
- 31 ~~[(i)]~~ (A) a smartphone;
- 32 ~~[(ii)]~~ (B) a feature phone;
- 33 ~~[(iii)]~~ (C) a mobile phone;
- 34 ~~[(iv)]~~ (D) a satellite phone; or
- 35 ~~[(v)]~~ (E) a personal digital assistant that incorporates capabilities similar to a
- 36 smartphone, feature phone, mobile phone, or satellite phone.
- 37 [(e) "Classroom hours" means:]
- 38 ~~[(i) time during which a student receives scheduled, teacher-supervised instruction~~
- 39 ~~that occurs:]~~
- 40 ~~[(A) in a physical or virtual classroom setting;]~~
- 41 ~~[(B) during regular school operating hours; and]~~
- 42 ~~[(C) as part of an approved educational curriculum.]~~
- 43 [(ii) "Classroom hours" does not include:]
- 44 ~~[(A) lunch periods;]~~
- 45 ~~[(B) recess;]~~
- 46 ~~[(C) transit time between classes;]~~
- 47 ~~[(D) study halls unless directly supervised by a qualified instructor;]~~
- 48 ~~[(E) after-school activities unless part of an approved extended learning program;~~
- 49 ~~or]~~
- 50 ~~[(F) independent study time occurring outside scheduled instruction.]~~
- 51 ~~[(d)]~~ (b)(i) "Emerging technology" means any other device that has or will be able to
- 52 act in place of or as an extension of an individual's cellphone.
- 53 (ii) "Emerging technology" does not include school provided or required devices.
- 54 (c) "School hours" means the time from the beginning of the school day, as designated
- 55 by the school's bell schedule, until the end of the school day, as designated by the
- 56 school's bell schedule, including all instructional time, lunch periods, recess, and
- 57 transition times between classes.
- 58 ~~[(e)]~~ (d) "Smart watch" means a wearable computing device that closely resembles a
- 59 wristwatch or other time-keeping device with the capacity to act in place of or as an
- 60 extension of an individual's cellphone.
- 61 ~~[(f)]~~ (e) "Smart watch" does not include a wearable device that can only:
- 62 (i) tell time;
- 63 (ii) monitor an individual's health informatics;

- 64 (iii) receive and display notifications or information without the capability to
 65 respond; or
- 66 (iv) track the individual's physical location.
- 67 (2) Except as provided in Subsection (3), a student may not use a cellphone, smart watch, or
 68 emerging technology at a school during school hours.
- 69 ~~[(2)]~~ (3)(a) [An] Notwithstanding this section, an LEA:
- 70 (i) shall establish a policy that allows a student to use a cellphone, smart watch, or
 71 emerging technology:
- 72 (A) to respond to an imminent threat to the health or safety of an individual;
 73 (B) to respond to a school-wide emergency;
 74 (C) to use the SafeUT Crisis Line described in Section 53H-4-210;
 75 (D) for a student's IEP or Section 504 accommodation plan; or
 76 (E) to address a medical necessity; and
- 77 (ii) in addition to the exceptions described in Subsection (3)(a)(i), may establish a
 78 policy that provides for other circumstances when a student may use a cellphone,
 79 smart watch, or emerging technology during the school day.
- 80 (b) An LEA may establish policies that:
- 81 (i) extend restrictions on student use of cellphones, smart watches, or emerging
 82 technologies to non-~~[classroom]~~ school hours~~[-during the school day], including[:]~~
 83 ~~[(A) lunch periods;]~~
 84 ~~[(B) transition times between classes; and]~~
 85 ~~[(C) other] school-supervised activities; and~~
- 86 (ii) impose additional limitations on the use of cellphones, smart watches, or
 87 emerging technologies beyond those required by this section.
- 88 ~~[(3) Except as provided in Subsection (2), a student may not use a cellphone, smart watch,~~
 89 ~~or emerging technology at a school during classroom hours.]~~
- 90 (4)(a) Notwithstanding Subsections (2) and (3), a parent or legal guardian of a student
 91 may submit a written opt-out request to the LEA.
- 92 (b) Upon receipt of a written opt-out request under Subsection (4)(a), an LEA shall
 93 permit the student to possess and use the student's cellphone, smart watch, or
 94 emerging technology:
- 95 (i) outside of instructional time, including:
- 96 (A) passing periods;
- 97 (B) lunch periods;

- 98 (C) release time; and
- 99 (D) before and after the school day; and
- 100 (ii) in a manner that does not materially disrupt instruction or LEA operations.
- 101 (c) An LEA may not require a student to have an individualized education program,
- 102 Section 504 accommodation plan, medical accommodation, or special education
- 103 designation as a condition for granting a parental opt-out under this Subsection (4).
- 104 (d) An LEA may continue to prohibit a student's use of a cellphone, smart watch, or
- 105 emerging technology during instructional time, except as otherwise permitted by a
- 106 teacher for instructional purposes.
- 107 (e) An LEA may adopt rules limiting use under this Subsection (4) to designated areas
- 108 of LEA property.
- 109 [~~(4)~~] (5) The state board may create one or more model policies regarding when a student
- 110 may use a student's cellphone, smart watch, or emerging technology in a school during [
- 111 classroom] school hours consistent with this section.

112 Section 2. **Effective Date.**

113 This bill takes effect on July 1, 2026.