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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 34

Offered January 10, 2024

Prefiled January 9, 2024

Directing the Joint Commission on Health Care to study the impact of cell phone possession and use on students in public schools. Report.

Patron—Maldonado

Referred to Committee on Studies Subcommittee

WHEREAS, cell phone ownership and use has become ubiquitous among school-age children, with smartphones in particular becoming increasingly prevalent; and

WHEREAS, smartphones expand the capabilities of cell phones beyond personal communication to nearly unlimited Internet access and access to countless games, applications, and other forms of entertainment, making the smartphone both an invaluable resource and a potent distraction; and

WHEREAS, studies show that an individual's ability to retain and recall information generally decreases as distractions in the environment increase; and

WHEREAS, the development of school policies relating to cell phone possession and use that balance the utility of cell phone possession with offsetting the detrimental potential of cell phone use during regular school hours is imperative for the education, safety, and mental and behavioral health of students; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Joint Commission on Health Care be directed to study the impact of cell phone possession and use on students in public schools. Such study shall include the impact of cell phone use on student learning outcomes, attention and retention, and mental health.

In conducting its study, the Joint Commission on Health Care shall examine the impact of student cell phone possession and use during regular school hours on:

1. Learning outcomes, including the quality of learning and the ability of students to retain and recall information;

2. Student attention and focus, including the ability of students to effectively multitask by dividing attention between cell phone use and educational lessons or tasks and the ability of students to focus on a single educational objective for a sustained period of time without becoming distracted by their cell phones; and

3. The mental health and behavior of students in the school environment.

Technical assistance shall be provided to the Joint Commission on Health Care by the Department of Education and each school board. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Joint Commission on Health Care for this study, upon request.

The Joint Commission on Health Care shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2024, and the chairman shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary of its findings and recommendations no later than the first day of the 2025 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary shall state whether the Joint Commission on Health Care intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

INTRODUCED

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