



Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood

February 22, 2018

Hon. Anne R. Kaiser, Chair, Ways and Means Committee
Hon. Eric G. Leudtke, Chair, Education Subcommittee
Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for HB 1110 — An Act Concerning Public Schools – Health And Safety Guidelines And Procedures – Digital Devices

Dear Chairwoman Kaiser, Chairman Leudtke, and Distinguished Subcommittee Members,

Thank you for considering Delegate Arentz's House Bill 1110, "An Act Concerning Public Schools – Health and Safety Guidelines and Procedures – Digital Devices." On behalf of the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood (CCFC), I am writing to ask that you give this bill your complete endorsement.

CCFC is a national advocacy organization that works to protect children from the harmful effects of commercialism. We have nearly 50,000 members, including more than 800 in Maryland. As part of our mission, we work with healthcare professionals and educators to help families instill healthy media habits in their children. We recently established the Children's Screen Time Action Network, which supports children's healthy development by fostering collaboration and resource sharing between professionals who help families manage their technology use.

Digital technologies, when used in age-appropriate and thoughtful ways, can enhance education. But the rush to incorporate individual digital devices into classrooms has not been accompanied by protections or guidelines which take into account the impact of excessive screen time on children's health and well-being.

A growing body of research clearly demonstrates that excessive screen time is linked to a host of negative outcomes for children, including attention and hyperactivity disorders and social-emotional problems. Screen time is linked to sleep disturbances and irregular sleep patterns in children under 12. There is also growing evidence linking excessive screen time to vision problems in children, including myopia and dry eye syndrome. And pediatricians and mental health professionals are increasingly concerned about digital dependence among children.

Given the documented health risks for children, it is critical that the Maryland Department of Education, in consultation with the Maryland Department of Health, develop clear, research-based health and safety guidelines for the use of digital devices in schools. HB 1110 will ensure that appropriate guidelines are developed in an equitable manner, with input from parents, educators, other stakeholders, and groups well-versed in the health impacts of screen devices on children's development, including CCFC. We are honored to have been chosen, and will be very glad to contribute to the wellbeing of Maryland students by serving in this role.

We shouldn't sacrifice children's overall wellbeing for the latest technological trends. Unrestricted absorption of screen technology into classrooms is creating health crises that will cost money and severely impact children's future potential. Developing and implementing the guidelines called for under HB 1110 will ensure that schools use technology in ways that enhance children's education without undermining their wellbeing.

I urge you to support HB 1110 and make Maryland the unquestioned national leader in providing safe learning environments for children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Josh Golin".

Josh Golin

Executive Director, CCFC