



## **For Release, August 2024: Responsible Cellphone Use Campaign; 2024-25 Parent/Caregiver Mobilization**

PTA Council, the official parent-group partner in Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS), which speaks for thousands of members, took a position at our March 2023 General Meeting to support the enforcement of the BCPS cellphone policy.

We are guided by National PTA's social media position recognizing *"... that social media and other digital technology can be a driver of success, enhancing the learning experience and fostering creativity and connectedness among students, educators, families and communities."* **But that:** *"... technology may also give rise to digital environments that can be harmful to children and youth ... Emerging research suggests that social media exposure may negatively impact mental health during an important developmental period and may undermine physical health and academic performance."*

Consistent with National PTA and BCPS, PTA Council does not support a ban on cellphones in school. We support the BCPS "off-and-away policy." However, the reality is the policy is not being implemented consistently.

A recent BCPS survey of over 5,000 stakeholders revealed mounting concerns about cellphones disrupting student learning and creating behavior issues during instructional time, as well as cellphones' negative effect on mental health and student safety. The survey also revealed frustration and confusion about how to manage this complicated problem. The debate surrounding the advantages and disadvantages of cellphone use in schools has become increasingly heated in recent years. There are valid arguments on both sides, with no mutually agreeable solution.

PTA Council recognizes the value of cellphones in augmenting education, as well as the risks of misuse and possible addiction. We are encouraging parents/caregivers, students, educators, and community members to come together to foster a positive balance between students, learning, and the appropriate use of cellphones during the school day.

To this end, PTA Council's Family, School, and Community Partnerships (FSCP) Committee established the Responsible Cellphone Use Taskforce. The taskforce seeks to address the growing cellphone epidemic among BCPS students (K-12). The taskforce is supporting BCPS and the BCPS Social Media Workgroup's cellphone policy initiatives.

We are launching a campaign to advocate for responsible cellphone use. Specifically, we are focusing on parent/caregiver and student education about appropriate and inappropriate cellphone use in school.

Please join us in advocating for common sense solutions, greater parent/caregiver awareness, engagement, and accountability around this issue. For the sake of our children, we must find a balance. We need "all hands on deck" to:

- Support the National PTA Social Media Position Statement.
- Promote well-defined school policies and encourage collaboration between educators, parents/caregivers, and students.
- Share information from the BCPS Social Media Workgroup and education advocacy groups on the negative impact of cellphone addiction on student learning, mental health, and safety.
- Join PTA Council's Responsible Cellphone Use Campaign.

For additional information or to join the Responsible Cellphone Use Campaign, contact Ramona Basilio, FSCP Committee Chair, [partnerships@bcptacouncil.org](mailto:partnerships@bcptacouncil.org).

