

Date of Hearing: May 6, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1644 (Muratsuchi) – As Amended April 28, 2026

Policy Committee: Education

Vote: 8 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: Yes

**SUMMARY:**

This bill strongly encourages a local educational agency's (LEA) governing board or body to adopt an entire school day bell-to-bell smartphone ban for high school pupils. The bill requires an LEA serving pupils in grades kindergarten through eight, to adopt no later than July 1, 2027, a smartphone use policy prohibiting the use of smartphones by pupils for the entire school day and prohibits instruction for pupils in grades kindergarten through eight from requiring use of a smartphone by a pupil.

The bill also requires the California Department of Education (CDE) to examine at least 30 adopted LEA smartphone policies, conduct surveys of each LEA whose policy is examined, and report to the Legislature and post on its internet website, on or before January 1, 2028, regarding its findings and recommended best practices.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

- 1) One-time General Fund costs of an unknown amount but likely in the hundreds of thousands of dollars for the CDE to conduct the required examination of at least 30 LEA smartphone policies, report to the Legislature, and provide technical assistance.
- 2) One-time Proposition 98 General Fund costs, potentially in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, to LEA governing boards and bodies to adopt updated policies imposing a bell-to-bell smartphone ban for pupils in grades kindergarten through eight by July 1, 2027.

Current law does not require LEAs to update existing smartphone use policies until July 1, 2031. Additionally, the bill allows an LEA's policy to include enforcement mechanisms to restrict access to smartphones, which may incur increased costs depending on the mechanism employed by an LEA.

If the Commission on State Mandates determines the bill's requirements to be a reimbursable state mandate, the state would need to reimburse these costs to schools or provide funding through the K-12 Mandate Block Grant.

The Legislative Analyst's Office recently warned of General Fund structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 fiscal year and ongoing.

**COMMENTS:**

1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

AB 1644 builds upon existing law by requiring schools to adopt clear, consistent ‘bell-to-bell’ policies that limit student use of smart phones throughout the school day, with appropriate exceptions for safety, health, and educational purposes.

2) **Background.** AB 3216 (Hoover), Chapter 500, Statutes of 2024, requires, by July 1, 2026, an LEA governing board or body to adopt a policy to limit or prohibit the use of smartphones by its students while students are at school or under the supervision of the school, with certain exceptions.

This bill mandates a bell-to-bell ban for smartphone use policies in an LEA serving pupils in grades kindergarten through eight, no later than July 1, 2027, and requires the CDE to examine updated policies and report the Legislature and post on its internet website its findings and recommendations by January 1, 2028.

**Analysis Prepared by:** Aaron Heredia / APPR. / (916) 319-2081