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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair  
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

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### SB 1128 (Stern) - Pupils: technology-based materials: school-issued electronic devices

**Version:** April 14, 2026

**Urgency:** No

**Hearing Date:** May 4, 2026

**Policy Vote:** ED. 7 - 0

**Mandate:** No

**Consultant:** Lenin Del Castillo

**Bill Summary:** This bill prohibits local educational agencies (LEA) from requiring students in transitional kindergarten (TK) and kindergarten to take home a school issued electronic device. The bill also requires the Department of Education (CDE) to develop and post on its internet website, model policies for the age-appropriate use of school-issued electronic devices in schools, as specified.

#### **Fiscal Impact:**

- This bill could result in one-time Proposition 98 General Fund costs potentially in the hundreds of thousands of dollars for LEAs to review and revise their policies on the use of school-issued electronic devices. This estimate assumes that each LEA would require several hours of personnel time to develop the policies.
- The California Department of Education may incur one-time General Fund costs in the low to mid hundreds of thousands of dollars to develop model policies on the age-appropriate use of electronic devices in schools.

**Background:** Existing law authorizes the governing board of a school district, a county board of education, or the governing body of a charter school to adopt a policy to limit or prohibit pupil use of social media while pupils are at a schoolsite or while the pupils are under the supervision and control of an employee or employees of that school district, county office of education (COE), or charter school. Specifies that the above authorization does not authorize the monitoring, collection, or otherwise accessing information related to a pupil's online activities.

Existing law requires the governing body of a school district, COE, or charter school to develop and adopt a policy by July 1, 2026, to limit or prohibit the use of smartphones by students while they are at school or under the supervision of a school employee, and to update the policy every five years.

Existing law prohibits an LEA's adopted smartphone use policy from restricting a student's use of a smartphone under specified circumstances, including in the case of an emergency or in response to a perceived threat of danger, unless explicitly addressed in a comprehensive school safety plan, or when a teacher or administrator grants permission to a student to possess or use a smartphone.

**Proposed Law:** This bill prohibits an LEA from requiring a pupil in kindergarten to take home a school-issued electronic device.

This bill requires the CDE, on or before July 1, 2027, to develop and post on its internet website, model policies for the age-appropriate use of school issued electronic devices in schools. In the development of the model policies, the CDE shall consider all of the following: developmentally appropriate screen exposure time; balancing pupils' use of school-issued electronic devices with direct teacher interaction; and the impact of school-issued electronic devices on early literacy, arithmetic, and fine motor skill development.

This bill defines "electronic device" as a desktop or laptop computer, handheld device, tablet, smartphone, or other electronic product or device that has a platform on which to download, install, or run any software program, code, script, or other content.

**Related Legislation:** AB 2071 (Hoover, 2026) requires CDE to develop a plan to expand digital wellness instruction in California public schools. AB 2071 is pending in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 3216 (Hoover, Chapter 500, Statutes of 2024) requires the governing body of a school district, county office of education, or a charter school to adopt a policy to limit or prohibit the use by its pupils of smartphones.

SB 1283 (Stern, Chapter 891, Statutes of 2024) authorizes an LEA to adopt a policy to limit or prohibit students from using social media while at a schoolsite or under the supervision and control of an employee of the LEA.

AB 272 (Muratsuchi, Chapter 42, Statutes of 2019) provides that a student shall not be prohibited from possessing or using a smartphone under specified circumstances and authorizes governing bodies to adopt a policy to limit or prohibit the use of smartphones by students while at school.

**Staff Comments:** This bill would prohibit LEAs from requiring TK and kindergarten students to take home school-issued electronic devices. This is in response to concerns about the increasing use of electronic devices and impacts of prolonged screen exposure. Some school districts have already adopted policies aimed at reducing screen time and setting forth guidelines on the use of technology in classrooms. This bill also requires the CDE to adopt a model policy on age-appropriate use of school-issued electronic devices in schools and consider developmentally appropriate screen exposure time and balancing pupils' use of school-issued electronic devices with direct teacher interaction.

According to the author, "Innovation is our state's greatest strength, but it should never come at the cost of our children's fundamental development. Today, we see five-year-olds coming home with school-issued laptops before they have even mastered the grip of a pencil. Senate Bill 1128 is a common-sense step to bring balance back to our homes and classrooms

"When we mandate that TK and kindergarten students must take a device home, we risk replacing direct teacher interaction with a digital interface. We are seeing a real threat to the development of early literacy, arithmetic, and those essential fine motor skills that every child needs to succeed. Senate Bill 1128 provides a common-sense

solution. Commencing with the 2027–28 school year, local educational agencies shall not require these young pupils to take home electronic devices. This returns the power to parents, ensuring that a child’s first “homework” isn’t navigating a screen.

“Furthermore, this bill ensures our schools lead with facts. By July 1, 2027, the Department of Education will develop model policies focused on developmentally appropriate screen exposure. These guidelines will focus on direct teacher interaction and the impact of screens on early literacy, arithmetic, and fine motor skills. We are grounding our educational technology in facts, not just trends.

“We are not anti-technology; we are pro-childhood. SB 1128 helps to ensure that parents are in the driver’s seat when it comes to their kids technology use, helping to ensure that the Golden State remains a place where our children’s futures are defined by their potential, not their screen time.”

**-- END --**