



MASSACHUSETTS PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY

860 Winter Street
Waltham MA 02451
(781) 237-8100
Fax: (781) 464-4896
Email: mps@mms.org

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Mr. Chairmen, members of the committee—thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

I'm Dr. Jhilam Biswas, a psychiatrist that specializes in Psychiatry and the Law, and the President of the Massachusetts Psychiatric Society, representing more than half of psychiatrists in the Commonwealth. I'm here to express our society's strong support for S335 and H666 An Act promoting safe technology use and distraction-free education for youth also known as the STUDY Act—the question of smartphones in schools is no longer about preference. It's about public health.

Let me take a moment to thank our Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell, and the chief legislative sponsors Sen Julian Cyr, Rep Alice Peisch and Rep Kate Lipper Garabedian. Thank you for making this issue a priority!

We are raising a generation of young people whose brains are still developing in an environment flooded with untested, addictive technology. The data is clear and concerning: since smartphones and social media became widespread around 2012, we've seen steep rises in anxiety, depression, attention problems, self-harm, and sleep disruption among youth.

These are not isolated clinical anecdotes—we are seeing the mental health crisis play out in real time. Students are struggling to focus, to connect, and to feel secure in themselves. Social media doesn't just distract—it displaces vital parts of development, like face-to-face interaction, resilience-building, and rest.

We believe schools should be sanctuaries—places of focus, of connection, and of personal tech and digital detox. Even if smartphones are used at home, the school day must give children a break from the noise and the pull of the algorithm. They need space to think on their own, without constant comparison or interruption.

The STUDY Act provides a thoughtful, balanced approach. It places clear boundaries on device use during school hours, and it recognizes the responsibility of smart phone and social media companies to protect our children. It empowers schools to create healthier environments and relieves parents of the impossible task of doing this alone.

At the Massachusetts Psychiatric Society, we believe this bill is a vital first step. The mental health of our youth—and the future of their learning—depends on what we do next.

Thank you for your time, and for your commitment to the well-being of children across the Commonwealth.

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