
Education Committee

SSB 6454

Brief Description: Regarding the use of portable or cellular phones or paging telecommunications devices by students.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Senators McAuliffe, Roach, Fairley, Eide, Regala, Winsley, Prentice, Shin, Kline, Thibaudeau, Johnson, Franklin, Keiser, Rasmussen, Zarelli, Jacobsen and B. Sheldon).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Limits the scope of a policy a school district may adopt regarding cell phones and pagers on school grounds, to a policy addressing the use of such devices on school grounds.

Hearing Date: 2/19/04

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

Background:

In 1997, the Legislature enacted E2SHB 1841, an omnibus bill of school safety improvements. That bill was intended to address a variety of school safety issues related to gang violence and other disruptive or criminal activity on school campuses through certain mandates and grants of permissive authority to school districts. One of those grants of authority was to allow school districts to adopt policies limiting the possession of pagers and cell phones by students.

Since that time the prevalence of cell phone ownership and use has increased significantly. A study by the Federal Communications and Trade Commission indicates that more than half of children ages 12 to 17 own a cell phone, and additional research by a company specializing in interactive research and marketing indicates that 21 percent of children ages eight to 12 own one.

Summary of Bill:

School district policies may limit the use of cell phones and pagers on school grounds or during school-sponsored activities. School districts may not adopt policies prohibiting the possession by students of cell phones and pagers. Such policies may, however, prohibit individual students from possessing cell phones and pagers if the student violates the district's policy prohibiting use of the devices.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.