

Digital Well-Being Bill

SF 1012/HF 1836

Testimony Excerpts – MN Senate 2021

The Bipartisan “Digital Well-Being” bill supports teachers, students, and parents by addressing the effects of misuse and overuse of screens on young people. The proposal creates a positive path forward by raising awareness and by educating school staff, parents, and young people about Digital Wellbeing practices that promote using technology with balance, responsibility, and intention.

LiveMore ScreenLess, an organization dedicated to addressing the problem of screen-time, testified to the MN Senate in Jan., Feb., and March 2021. The attached testimony excerpts speak to the need and desire for Minnesota schools and communities to receive education and resources for changing the trajectory of digital misuse and overuse.

“The increased reliance on screen time has become too much for many families to manage, and I fear it has taken an unknown toll on our students. Even before the pandemic, students were already spending many hours every day in front of a screen; on their phones, on social media, watching TV, and playing video games. Add to that a full schedule of online classes and students are potentially spending an alarming amount of time every day on devices. That is why we should be looking at ways to educate students, parents and staff on the importance of limiting the amount of screen time students are experiencing.

LiveMore ScreenLess has been instrumental in helping our district combat this crisis. LiveMore has helped our school district evaluate and educate students, parents and staff about the negative effects too much screen time is having on kids and then, as written on the LiveMore ScreenLess website, “creating policies, processes, and practices that support and sustain Digital Wellbeing.”

Todd Sesker, Superintendent, Faribault Public Schools

“The round-the-clock responding to texts, posting to social media, obsessively following exploits of peers, comparing self to others definitely affects moods and personalities. Many students are not wanting to go to school, they are more comfortable being at home learning online and not “dealing” with life. They’re not learning resilience, they are overweight, tired and definitely not ready to learn.

The use of technology isn’t going away, so we need to learn how to manage it. Without the guidance, and funding of an outside organization, it is difficult for educators and communities to get this agenda off the ground.”

Tami Duke, School Counselor Silver Bay, MN

“We cannot let children and parents cope with the impacts of digital technology on their own; this is and will become an even greater public health crisis, especially as the impact of COVID has led to even more screen time. Research also shows that children’s attention spans are literally getting shorter and it is likely that they crave the highly stimulating world of their devices whereas the lower stimulation that they get from reading a book or listening to a teacher just does not meet that craving.”

Dr. Karin Hampton, Licensed Clinical Psychologist, MN



“For me and a good majority of my colleagues, the #1 challenge in being an effective teacher is the distractions caused by cell phones and computers. Regardless of the rules or policies that schools and teachers attempt to put in place, the critical mass of cell phones/computers in the classroom has made the monitoring of their appropriate unmanageable.

Just like all of us, high school students carry their cell phones at all times and have them with them in school. The expectation of teachers to monitor and restrict cell phone presence in school is not only unreasonable but impossible.”

Tom Myers, High School Social Studies Teacher, Henry Sibley High School

“I’m cautious about what I put on the internet and I worry about the perception people will have on me if I post a certain thing. It’s no longer a place to go to connect with friends and share our experiences. My misuse of technology has ultimately led to the corruption of my mind. There was no one to tell us how to properly use social media and technology in a way that wasn’t damaging to our brains...and our bodies...and our mental health.

We are determined to fix this digital epidemic that has plagued our society for years. Intentional usage is our main goal, not canceling usage. The LiveMore Youth Council is working on a Digital Wellbeing Training that includes modules, testimonies, journal prompts and more, that will hopefully help to see how technology can be used more intentionally.

We, as young people, are asking you to listen and be understanding and do as much as you can to help combat this issue.”

Danyelle Robinson, LiveMore ScreenLess Youth Council

“Many of the children who were born around the establishment of personalized screens are now grown up enough to see the effects of it on their lifestyle. Like me despite the negative effects many can’t overcome the deep-rooted behaviors that have been initiated. Rather I think it’s important to practice methods of prevention at a younger age before habits have a chance to form. With early education, healthy screen use can be easily taught and learned.

That is why it’s important to raise awareness and there’s no one more qualified to pass on the message than those of us who have experienced it first-hand. LiveMore is not just a teaching experience but also a learning experience. I feel I belong and where I know I’m not alone in my struggles.”

Miles Hill, LiveMore ScreenLess Youth Council

“As a clinical social worker, I have seen firsthand the negative impact of excessive screen use on children’s mental health. As professionals, parents and educators, we need to focus on prevention as well as intervention and create safe screen boundaries for our youth. The need for limits, education and support around this issue is a matter of basic public health. LiveMore ScreenLess is a comprehensive, thoughtful, empirically supported and multi-faceted approach. They have researched the issues, analyze the data, listen to community and professional input (not to mention fantastic work with youth input) to create tools, resources and a vision for a better balance in this regard. I am so impressed with their work and honored to share my expertise in support of their mission.”

Sara Zimmerman, MSW, LICSW, Shriners Hospitals for Children, Twin Cities

