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BILL: Senate Bill 657  
TITLE: Task Force to Study the Impact of Cell Phone Use in Public Schools  
DATE: March 2, 2016  
POSITION: OPPOSE  
COMMITTEE: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs  
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Senate Bill 657 establishes the Task Force to Study the Impact of Cell Phone Use in Public Schools; providing for the composition, chair, and staffing of the Task Force; prohibits a member of the Task Force from receiving specified compensation and authorizing the reimbursement of specified expenses; requiring the Task Force to study, assess, and consider specified matters; and requires the Task Force to report findings and recommendations, as specified, to the Governor and General Assembly on or before December 1, 2016.

PSSAM appreciates the intent of Senate Bill 657. However we respectfully **oppose** this proposed legislation creating the Task Force to Study Cell Phone Use in Public Schools.

PSSAM strongly believe that it is critical that locally-governed education policies and procedures remain under the authority of local boards of education. Each local school board must have the flexibility to develop individual student policies and practices that reflect the specific and diverse needs of their system.

Local superintendents have placed a high priority on well-defined and effective cell phone practices for the compliance of their students. For example, Montgomery County has developed differentiated rules and regulations by grade level for cell phone use in all schools. In middle and high school, students can have their cell phone on hand during the school day, but it must be kept off and out of sight during school hours. Students are instructed to take the battery out if they need to do so to be compliant. High school students can use their cell phones during lunch. Elementary school students are not allowed to have portable communication devices during the school day, unless a parent writes a request to the principal and receives approval.

PSSAM believes a Task Force on this particular issue is not necessary. We strongly believe that it is critical that locally-governed education policies and procedures remain under the authority of local boards of education.

For the reasons stated above, PSSAM **RE** Senate Bill 657 and requests an **unfavorable** committee report.