

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

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HOUSE BILL 959
Committee Substitute Favorable 5/6/25
Senate Education/Higher Education Committee Substitute Adopted 5/21/25

Short Title: Protecting Students in a Digital Age.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

April 14, 2025

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO PROMOTE INTERNET SAFETY, TO REQUIRE SOCIAL MEDIA LITERACY
INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS, AND TO REQUIRE REGULATION OF STUDENT USE
OF WIRELESS COMMUNICATION DEVICES DURING INSTRUCTIONAL TIME.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1.(a) Part 3A of Article 8 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 115C-102.10. Internet safety policy.

(a) Local boards of education shall adopt policies for student access to the internet on devices or internet services provided by the local school administrative unit. The policies shall do at least the following:

- (1) Limit access by students to only age-appropriate subject matter and materials.
- (2) Protect the safety and security of students when accessing email, chat rooms, and other forms of electronic communication.
- (3) Prohibit unauthorized access by students to data or information maintained by the local school administrative unit, including by "hacking" and other unlawful online activities.
- (4) Prevent access to websites, web applications, or software that do not protect against the disclosure, use, or dissemination of a student's personal information.
- (5) Prohibit and prevent students from accessing social media platforms, except when expressly directed by a teacher solely for educational purposes.
- (6) Prohibit the use of the TikTok application. For the purposes of this section, TikTok includes any successor application or service developed or provided by ByteDance Limited or an entity owned by ByteDance Limited.

(b) Employees of local boards of education shall not use TikTok for any job-related duties, including classroom instruction or to communicate or promote any unit- or school-sponsored club, extracurricular organization, or athletic team."

SECTION 1.(b) G.S. 115C-47 is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

"(70) To Adopt an Internet Safety Policy. – Local boards of education shall adopt policies for internet safety in accordance with G.S. 115C-102.10."

SECTION 2.(a) Part 1 of Article 8 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 115C-81.26. Social media and mental health.



The standard course of study shall include instruction on social media and its effects on health, including social, emotional, and physical effects. Instruction shall be provided once during elementary school, once during middle school, and twice during high school. Instruction on this topic shall include at least the following:

- (1) Negative effects of social media on mental health, including addiction.
- (2) The distribution of misinformation on social media.
- (3) Methods of manipulating behavior using social media.
- (4) The permanency of information shared online.
- (5) How to maintain personal security.
- (6) How to identify cyberbullying, predatory behavior, and human trafficking on the internet.
- (7) How to report suspicious behavior encountered on the internet.
- (8) Personal and interpersonal skills or character education that enhances individual level protective factors and mitigates or reduces risk-taking or harmful behavior."

SECTION 2.(b) This section is effective when it becomes law and applies beginning with the 2026-2027 school year.

SECTION 3. Article 7B of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new Part to read:

"Part 8. Miscellaneous Requirements.

"§ 115C-76.100. Regulation of wireless communication devices.

(a) The following definitions apply in this section:

- (1) Wireless communication device. – Any portable wireless device that has the capability to provide voice, messaging, or other data communication between two or more parties, including the following:
 - a. Cellular telephones.
 - b. Tablet computers.
 - c. Laptop computers.
 - d. Paging devices.
 - e. Two-way radios.
 - f. Gaming devices.

(2) Wireless communication policy. – A policy governing the use of wireless communication devices by students.

(b) The governing body of a public school unit shall establish a wireless communication policy. At a minimum, except as permitted in subsection (c) of this section, the policy shall prohibit students from using, displaying, or having a wireless communication device turned on during instructional time.

(c) A wireless communication policy shall allow student use of a wireless communication device during instructional time as follows:

- (1) If authorized by a teacher for educational purposes or for use in the event of an emergency. The governing body may establish parameters to be followed by a teacher in granting authorizations.
- (2) As required by the student's individualized education program or section 504 (29 U.S.C. § 794) plan.
- (3) As required to manage a student's health care, in accordance with a documented medical condition.

(d) The governing body shall establish the consequences for violations of the wireless communication policy, which may include confiscation of the wireless communication device and disciplinary measures under the public school unit's Code of Student Conduct.

(e) No later than September 1 of the year in which this section becomes effective, every public school unit shall send to the Department of Public Instruction a copy of the public school

1 unit's wireless communication policy. The public school unit shall provide the Department of
2 Public Instruction with a copy of the wireless communication policy anytime it is changed. No
3 later than October 1 of each year, the Department of Public Instruction shall report to the Joint
4 Legislative Education Oversight Committee the number of public school units that are in
5 compliance with this section and the name of any public school unit which is not in compliance
6 with this section."

7 **SECTION 4.** Except as otherwise provided, this act is effective when it becomes law
8 and applies beginning with the 2025-2026 school year.