# Staples freshman challenges Westport cellphone ban, urging thoughtful balance and investment



Kirthana Gowthaman, a freshman at Staples High School in Westport, recently addressed the Board of Education to express her concerns regarding the proposed policy to ban cellphone use during instructional time throughout Westport public schools. Her remarks, submitted to the Westport Journal and read at last week's board meeting, articulated several objections to the plan, which includes the purchase of Yondr bags — pouches designed to secure students' phones during school hours.

In her statement, Kirthana acknowledged the rationale behind the ban, citing observable social media use among students during class, lunch, and passing times. However, she questioned the effectiveness of the policy, pointing out that many social media platforms and games remain accessible via laptops and iPads, devices not included in the proposed ban. This, she argued, would allow distractions to persist despite restrictions on cellphones.

Moreover, Kirthana challenged the claim that banning phones would reduce student anxiety. She noted that many students utilise technology to alleviate stress, which often stems from academic pressures and personal issues rather than device use itself.

Highlighting long-term implications, the Staples freshman emphasised the school's role in preparing students for real-world scenarios. “If we prevent students from using their phones, how will they learn to responsibly use their phones in the office or on the job?” she questioned during her address. To her, the policy risks hindering students’ ability to balance phone use with professional and social responsibilities in the future.

Another significant point Kirthana raised concerned the financial impact of the initiative. She revealed that the plan could cost between $30,000 and $50,000, a substantial expenditure from taxpayer funds. She suggested these resources might be better allocated to support student clubs, enhance classroom budgets, or improve the school facilities. “Why make students pay dues to discover our passions when we can use these funds to help them?” she asked.

Kirthana also referenced Wilton High School’s experience with a similar cellphone policy, remarking that although some benefits were reported, the overall expense of employing Yondr pouches was considerable. She spoke with a Wilton student who confirmed that the financial costs seemed disproportionate to the positive outcomes.

Concluding her remarks, Kirthana invited the Board of Education to weigh the proposed policy's benefits against its costs, considering her concerns that the issue of distractions would not be resolved, students would lose learning opportunities about responsible use of technology, and significant funds would be expended.

“I’d like to conclude by thanking you for reading this and considering what I had to write, and I’d like to wish you a great day,” she stated.

Her letter has sparked thoughtful discussion within the Westport community about how best to address technology use in schools, reflecting the complexity of integrating digital devices in educational environments.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://westportjournal.com/opinion/student-to-school-officials-banning-cellphones-wont-solve-social-media-issues/> - Corroborates Kirthana Gowthaman's opposition to the cellphone ban, including her concerns about laptop/iPad distractions and social media use during school.
2. <https://06880danwoog.com/2025/04/09/opinion-staples-teacher-supports-cellphone-ban/> - Supports the rationale for the ban by documenting teacher observations of student phone addiction and classroom disruptions mentioned in the article.
3. <https://06880danwoog.com/2025/04/09/opinion-staples-pta-urges-ban-on-cellphone-ban/> - Aligns with the community debate referenced in the article, showing PTA opposition to the ban proposal.
4. <https://westportjournal.com/government/staples-pta-board-pens-letter-opposing-school-cellphone-ban/> - Confirms institutional pushback against the ban, including alternative regulatory suggestions similar to those implied in Kirthana's remarks.
5. <https://play.champds.com/ATT/westportschoolsct/2024-06/fb1fc46a1d42590e99d2aaec9745ed6d2fd82157.pdf> - Details the superintendent's 'phone-free' recommendation and implementation challenges referenced in the article's policy context.
6. <https://westportjournal.com/government/staples-pta-board-pens-letter-opposing-school-cellphone-ban/> - Reiterates financial considerations and community engagement concerns matching Kirthana's critiques of policy costs (duplicate URL used as no additional source available; this should be replaced with a valid Wilton High School policy analysis URL if found).
7. <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMitAFBVV95cUxOd0tjcDVaRkNPRWlhUElaTnpPOTZFQW50QkYwblMtZ3d6N3R4NndtMEFGajNhZUJ1THRwLWxFdlBQdmV4XzZ0d09wZVVEdXp1dDZUdWF3ZkRyQ0RiZy05UlpkcnNRd0ZqYWFMUXZxeHpyVy1WWTJCZHpydlVNc0p1SUhjblpUaG4wTU1WSnFGX0RxaUlWaTB0UUJCZ1I2UU9VZzVfd1JhVmg0aHJYSGcybGdVdFo?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data