

Michigan Enacts Statewide Classroom Cell Phone Ban for K–12 Public Schools Beginning 2026–27

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On Feb. 10, 2026, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed House Bill 4141 and Senate Bill 495 into law, creating a statewide ban on student cellphone use in public schools during K–12 classroom instructional time beginning in the 2026–27 school year. While the law requires districts to ban use during class, it preserves local discretion outside instructional periods: districts may allow use of devices between classes or at lunch or adopt stricter full-day restrictions. In practice, districts will need to draw clear lines between instructional time and non-instructional periods, and then align student handbooks, classroom procedures, and disciplinary codes with those lines.

House Bill 4141 amends the Revised School Code to mandate that each school district “establish a wireless communications device policy to ban the use of cellphones on school grounds during instructional time,” while leaving day-to-day implementation details to local boards. The law defines “school grounds” to include a building, playing field, or property used for school purposes to impart instruction to children or used for functions and events sponsored by a school, but expressly excludes a building used primarily for adult education or college extension courses.

Senate Bill 495 works in tandem with HB 4141 by updating Michigan’s school emergency operations planning law to specify “when and how students may use cellphones during an emergency.” In other words, every emergency operations plan required under the Revised School Code now must explain under what circumstances students may use phones or other wireless devices in an emergency and how that use will be controlled so it does not interfere with safety procedures.

Critically, the statutory scheme preserves several narrow exceptions. The law provides that “[a] wireless communications device policy implemented under this section must provide exemptions for all of the following:” and then lists six categories:

1. Medically necessary devices

Students may use devices that are medically necessary, such as phones or related technology used for health monitoring or alerts.

2. District-owned devices

The ban does not apply to district-owned devices, including school-issued tablets, laptops, or similar equipment.

3. District-designated instructional devices

Devices that the district has formally designated for instructional use are exempt from the ban.

4. Special education and disability accommodations

Devices used for special education programming or provided as an accommodation under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or as part of an individualized education plan under the ADA must be allowed.

5. Lesson-specific assignments at teacher discretion

Teachers may permit device use for specific academic assignments, but only on a limited, lesson-specific basis and at their direct discretion.

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6. Emergency situations under the district's emergency operations plan

Students may use devices in emergency situations described in the district's emergency operations plan, provided that such use does not interfere with school emergency protocols, does not impede first responders, and does not endanger students or staff.

For school leaders, the immediate work is operational. It would be prudent for districts to draft or update wireless device policies that meet the statutory minimum, define permissible non-instructional use, and integrate the required exceptions in a way that is workable for staff and nondiscriminatory for students with disabilities. The law also requires that the new policy be posted on the district website. At the same time, boards will need to update emergency operations plans to incorporate cellphone-use protocols, coordinate with law enforcement on concerns about 911 overload, and prepare clear communications to families, students, and staff explaining their respective rules and regulations.

If you have questions about how this law may impact your school, please reach out to your Miller Canfield attorney or one of the authors of this alert.