

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: March 4, 2026 – HF 3776

To: Members of the Education Policy Committee

Affiliation: The Minnesota Association of School Administrators, and Stillwater Area Public Schools

City: Stillwater, Minnesota

Chairs and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I am writing to share concerns and respectfully request that you not support amendments to HF 3776 as currently drafted.

I understand and appreciate the desire to protect young children and keep preschool and kindergarten classrooms focused on hands-on, interaction-based learning. However, HF 3776 would move Minnesota from a commonsense limit on screen use to a blanket prohibition. Preschool and kindergarten students across Minnesota do not deserve a “one-size-fits-all” approach as a classroom policy.

Minnesota law already addresses the core concern - unsupervised or passive screen use - by limiting “individual-use” screens unless there is engagement from a teacher or other students. In the preschool and kindergarten settings in our schools, and in classrooms around the state, children are not given unsupervised screen time at school. When screens are used at all, they are generally brief, purposeful, and adult-directed. The current standard recognizes the important difference between passive screen time and intentional, educator-guided learning.

A full prohibition on “individual-use screens” at school sites would also remove developmentally appropriate opportunities to use technology in creative and educational ways. Technology can be one tool - among many - that supports learning when used intentionally and sparingly. For example, coding can be introduced in age-appropriate ways (sequencing, patterning, problem-solving, and beginner “coding” activities) that build foundational skills. There are also times when short, teacher-guided use of a tablet supports early literacy, language learning, or individualized practice, especially when paired with discussion and active learning.

I am also concerned about unintended equity impacts. HF 3776 appears to permit screen use only through formal plans (IFSP/IEP/504). While those plans are essential supports, not every child who benefits from a targeted learning tool has - or should be required to obtain - a formal plan in order to access appropriate instruction. A blanket ban risks pushing schools toward unnecessary paperwork or limiting supports for children who need them.

Finally, we strongly believe these decisions should involve local community feedback and local control. Preschool and kindergarten programs across Minnesota vary widely in size, staffing, student needs, and instructional approach. Local school boards, early childhood program leaders, and families are best positioned to set clear expectations for developmentally appropriate technology use - grounded in community input and professional expertise. If the Legislature wants to strengthen guardrails, a better approach would be to require local policies (with parent/community engagement and transparency) that:

- Keep screen use minimal and purposeful,
- Prohibit unsupervised or passive individual screen use,
- Emphasize teacher engagement and peer interaction, and
- Allow intentional, educator-directed instructional use where it clearly supports learning.

For these reasons, we ask the committee to vote “no” on HF 3776 as written, or to amend it to preserve local control and to focus on preventing unsupervised / passive screen time rather than banning all individual-use screen learning activities in preschool and kindergarten.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Eric Simmons, Executive Director of Technology

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March 4, 2026

Dear Members of the House Education Policy Committee,

On behalf of the over 1,000 members of the Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics committed to improving the health of children and adolescents across Minnesota, we write in strong support of HF 3776, which would prohibit individual-use screen time for children in publicly funded preschool and kindergarten programs.

Pediatricians see firsthand how digital media use affects children's physical health, mental health, learning, and development. AAP's age-based recommendations reflect what we know about early brain development: screen use in early childhood should be minimal, high-quality, and supported by adult engagement. During these formative years, hands-on, unstructured play and direct interaction with caregivers and teachers are essential for healthy language development, executive functioning, and social-emotional growth.

HF 3776 is consistent with these principles. Preschool and kindergarten classrooms are foundational environments for developing attention, self-regulation, early literacy, and social skills. Reducing individual-use screens during the school day helps ensure that technology does not displace interactive learning, movement, imaginative play, and relationship-building with teachers and peers.

Research demonstrates clear risks associated with high levels of media use in young children, including increased risk of obesity, disrupted sleep, and challenges with attention and learning. Excessive or unsupervised exposure may also increase the likelihood of encountering inappropriate content or media depicting risky behaviors. In contrast, high-quality, interactive experiences better support healthy development.

HF 3776 aligns with established pediatric guidance and reflects our shared responsibility to create learning environments that promote healthy brain development and lifelong well-being. We urge your support for HF 3776.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Smentek".

Katie Smentek, MD

President, Minnesota Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics