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**MAYOR DE BLASIO AND CHANCELLOR FARIÑA TO LIFT SCHOOL CELL PHONE BAN**

*New policy will enable parents of 1.1 million children to stay in touch, increase safety, and treat students at all schools fairly*

*Schools will increase education and training on cyber-bullying prevention and promote responsible 'Digital Citizenship' among students*

**NEW YORK**—Mayor Bill de Blasio and Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña today announced the City will lift the ban on cell phones at schools, a policy affecting all 1.1 million students. The change will better enable parents to stay in touch with their children, especially before and after school. It will also end the inequity under the current ban, which was enforced mostly at schools with metal detectors in low-income communities.

The existing Chancellor's Regulation bans cell phones and other electronic devices like iPads from school property. Students are required to leave their cell phones at home or leave them outside the building, often incurring a daily charge for private storage that can cost a family on average \$180 each year.

The reform announced today lifts the ban, and, if approved by the Panel for Educational Policy in February, will take effect in all schools on March 2. It allows for each school's principal to consult with School Leadership Teams in developing a cell phone policy tailored for the unique needs of their students. As part of the change, schools will increase education and training to identify and prevent cyber-bullying, including a "Misuse It, You Lose It" policy.

"Parents should be able to call or text their kids. That's something Chirlane and I felt ourselves when Chiara took the subway to high school in another borough each day, and we know it's a sentiment parents across this city share. Lifting the ban respects families, and it will end the unequal enforcement that has penalized students at so many high-needs schools. We are giving educators the tools and the flexibility to make this change responsibly," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**.

"Lifting the cell phone ban is about common sense, while ensuring student safety as well as high-level learning in our classrooms," said **Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña**. "As a parent and a grandmother, I know that families and children feel safer when our students have access to cell phones. I also know that it's simply not fair that members of school communities without metal detectors are more likely to have that sense of comfort than other families and students. With today's changes, we are demonstrating our commitment to student safety and community concerns, as well as our respect for principals, as we allow them to develop a cell phone policy that best addresses their individual school's unique challenges and circumstances."

The new changes would remove cell phones and electronic communication devices from the list of banned items in schools, and create a new regulation, A-413, that specifically governs their use in school. Under the new regulation, principals will consult with School Leadership Teams in deciding among a range of options for their schools, depending on what they feel best meets the needs of their students, families and educators. In the

coming weeks, schools will receive guidance on how to create an appropriate use policy. Among the options are:

- Store mobile devices in backpacks or a designated location during the school day
- Allow mobile devices to be used during lunch or in designated areas only
- Allow mobile devices for instructional purposes in some or all classrooms

For schools that do not develop a written cell phone policy promptly, the default will be a policy that allows students to bring cell phones into the building, but requires that the school or students store the phones out of sight for the duration of the school day. All cell phone policies must prohibit the use of cell phones during examinations, as well as during internal emergency preparedness drills and exercises, and be consistent with the DOE's Discipline Code. Schools will have a range of options for discipline in cases where cell phones are misused, including confiscation.

"This new policy recognizes that, in this day and age, technology is very much a part of students' and families' everyday lives," said **Xhenete Shepard, principal of High School of Telecommunication Arts and Technology**. "Our time is better spent not fighting technology, but rather helping students recognize how to use technology productively and responsibly. This is a common-sense reform, and I look forward to the positive impact it will have on my students and school."

"Technology and communications is always evolving, and the Chancellor's proposal to lift the cell phone ban is a great step in the right direction," said **City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**. "Students should have access to various means of communication, and I hope schools find common ground to ensure that communications are widely accessible, while maintaining a strong learning environment."

"I commend Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Farina for lifting the Department of Education's long-standing cell phone ban. Cellular phones are necessary for students to communicate with their families during emergencies, and increases personal security for students as they travel home. It is appropriate to allow principals and other school leaders to determine the best policy to prevent cells and other electronic devices from providing a distraction. This common-sense policy change better serves our city's youth, and demonstrates the administration's ongoing commitment to families," said **Public Advocate Letitia James**.

"Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Fariña have made the right call—in today's New York cell phones are lifelines between parents and their kids, and the idea behind the ban is simply obsolete," said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. "What's more, by ending the need for paid cell phone storage outside the schools, we're eliminating what's amounted to a regressive tax on many working parents."

"I am confident that this new policy is going to be of tremendous benefit to our students, families and schools," said **State Assembly Education Committee Chair Cathy Nolan**. "As this administration recognizes, our approach to education must be holistic, and students will learn better when they are in safe and supportive environments. In this case, the new policy shows tremendous respect to students and families, as well as educators. I hope educators will continue to engage parents and school communities as they develop school-specific, individualized cell-phone policies that meet their students' unique needs, reflect a commitment to equity, and facilitate safety and learning in the classroom."

"Nothing is more important than the safety of our students, and in this day and age, it's more important than ever for families to be able to reach their child during an emergency," said **City Council Education Committee Chair Danny Dromm**. "The previous policy did not reflect the concerns of families and students across the City. These changes finally listen to the needs of communities—including communities of color and high-needs communities—while empowering educators to create policies that will enrich the classroom and create the high-quality learning environments our students need to thrive."

“On the topic of cell phones, parents, teachers and students know their school best. They will also be the best equipped to make sure that their school rules are enforced so this change doesn’t interfere with instruction,” said **Michael Mulgrew, President, United Federation of Teachers.**

“For nearly a decade, the cell phone ban has imposed enormous burdens on parents and children who need to be able to communicate with each other before students arrive home from school. Cell phones have also been a needless flashpoint of confrontation between children and the police personnel who work in their schools. Particularly in schools with metal detectors where students are overwhelmingly low-income black and Latino youth, a confrontation over a cell phone too often results in a pointless dustup between children and the officers they are supposed to trust and respect. That creates ill will and mistrust. Worse, it too often ends in the kids who need help the most missing school because of a suspension, ticket or even an arrest. The de Blasio administration should be commended for taking this important step,” said **NYCLU Executive Director Donna Lieberman.**

“We understand the concerns expressed by the Mayor and Chancellor regarding the inequity in the present policy, and parents and guardians desire to communicate with their children. As school leaders, we share those concerns. Our collective priority is educating students in a safe and secure environment. We hope these new policies do not undermine that goal. We look forward to seeing the DOE’s guidance for schools and principals on how to create a cell phone policy, knowing that Principals will have to work with their school communities to ensure a policy that is enforceable and fair,” said **CSA President Ernest Logan.**

“The LAMP is thrilled that the ban on school cell phone use has been lifted, and with it a policy that hindered 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning. We fully support the bold decision by the Department of Education. We look forward to working with students, educators and administrators to foster modernized learning environments based on mutual respect and the need to prepare students with skills necessary for real-world success,” said **D.C. Vito, Executive Director of The LAMP.**

The proposed changes to the Chancellor’s Regulations must be approved by the Panel for Educational Policy. These changes will be voted on at the Panel’s February 25 meeting.

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