

HOLD THE PHONE! ... BETTER STILL, DON'T!

By Representative Andrea Boland



“Warning: This device emits electromagnetic radiation, exposure to which may cause brain cancer. Users, especially children and pregnant women, should keep this device away from the head and body.” [text of new cellphone-warning label legislation proposed in Maine]

Don't pick up that cellphone until you learn how to use it. Don't provide one to a child or others without knowing the risks, which are great and growing, as cellphone use becomes more widespread. Children and pregnant women are at greatest risk because of the developing brains and bodies, and thin skulls of children and fetuses. Electromagnetic radiation constantly pulses into us when we hold the device against our head or body. The biggest risk is brain cancer, but there are many other effects being reported, such as fertility problems and mental functioning. Many independent scientific studies show a significantly increased risk of brain cancer from use over time. The risk is cumulative – it increases with usage.



Professor Lennart Hardell, Professor of Oncology and Cancer Epidemiology at Orebro University in Orebro, Sweden, an internationally-acclaimed expert, found significantly increased risk of brain tumors from ten or more years of cellphone or cordless-phone use. (Cordless phones use the same technology.) His findings include the following: (1) For every 100 hours of use, the risk of brain cancer increases by 5%; (2) For every year of use, the risk of brain cancer increases by 8%; (3) After ten or more years of digital cellphone use, there was a 280% increased risk of brain cancer; (4) For digital cellphone users who were teenagers or younger when they first started use, there was a 420% increased risk of brain cancer.¹

When I read the “15 Reasons” report, I was so concerned that I called the author/editor, who has been researching the subject for about 15 years, and is internationally known for his work. I have since been in touch with other experts, and concluded it was time to get warning labels on cellphones and their packaging in Maine. This is the first legislative effort of its kind in the United States.

In this session of the legislature (the second year of the term), new bills need to be approved as “emergency legislation” in order to be allowed into the legislative process

– to improve efficiency and save taxpayers' money for operation of the legislature. It is not easy to get a bill approved, but the body of evidence on the cellphone risk is so substantial that my cellphone warning bill, The Children's Wireless Protection Act, earned a unanimous vote of the 10-member Legislative Council, the leadership of the legislature – Republicans and Democrats, Representatives and Senators.

You will not find this troubling message widely reported in the general media or generally coming from government and medical industry sources. In fact, you may see a flurry of media pieces trying to subtly discredit the thousands of studies by many independent scientists from all over the World, in favor of findings of industry-funded or industry-influenced studies. However, there is a reason why many other countries and the European Parliament have long ago issued dramatic warnings against use by children, variously defined as up to 18 years of age. In France, there is legislation to ban advertising and sales to young children. In Germany, there are towns pulling wireless out of schools. If, at the very least, we apply the Precautionary Principle, warning labels are needed in the U.S.

Like the Maine legislature's Legislative Council, and all the independent scientific experts who have dedicated themselves to research on this issue, we all need to understand that this is an emergency, and we need to take prompt action to protect ourselves and others. This bill, if passed, will come at no cost to taxpayers, or to Maine retailers and distributors, and at little, if any, to manufacturers. It calls for warning labels to be affixed to all cellphones sold in Maine, and their packaging. It is designed to alert every buyer or user to one important fact: Cellphone use may cause brain cancer, so keep the device away from the head and body.

In Maine, out of a population of 1.3 million, we have about 15,000 live births a year. Nearly 90% of the population uses cellphones, many frequently buying new ones. We have pregnant mothers using cellphones and holding them by their tummies. We have infants and young children being held by mothers and fathers using cellphones at the same time, enveloping both in the electromagnetic field. Parents, grandparents, and others give children cellphones as gifts.

Young people frequently sleep with them underneath their pillows, the electromagnetic emissions pulsing into their brains all night. A similar scenario is being played out nationally. It is criminal that we have not been warned of the risks to our innocents.


Experts believe we are facing a pandemic of brain cancers coming our way if we don't act fast. These are the reasons why this is *emergency* legislation, as was unanimously voted by Maine's Legislative Council. If many citizens change their use of cellphones because of this warning, innumerable brain tumor diagnoses will not occur, and many lives be saved.

My bill – An Act to Enact the Children's Wireless Protection Act – does not ban cellphones. They are a convenience and a fixture in our lives. Yet, they can be used more safely; and that means, in part, keeping them away from the head or body. To do so, experts advise the following:

- (1) Use the speakerphone rather than holding it to your ear;
- (2) Use a wired headset (not a wireless one such as a Bluetooth) so you can place the phone away from your body;
- (3) Use the texting mode, rather than holding to your ear;
- (4) Have short conversations, and use a corded phone for lengthy ones;
- (5) Do not allow children under 18 to use cellphones other than for emergencies;
- (6) Do not carry cellphones against your body, particularly in trouser or shirt pockets; instead, use a holster designed to shield the body from cellphone radiation, as there is a risk to other organs;
- (7) Keep turned off as much as possible; and
- (8) Don't allow youngsters to sleep with them under their pillows.

We can be proud that a small State like Maine is leading the way in initiating this legislation, the first in the U.S. It is truly a victory for democracy. Other countries are watching with excitement to see if America will join them in helping lift this weight from the shoulders of our children. Some of the countries that already have issued warnings are England, France (the strongest, even moving to ban advertising and sales to children, requiring earphones, and advancing new radiation limits), Germany

(some towns pulling wifi out of the schools), India, Israel, Russia, Belgium, China, Japan, and Toronto, Canada.

The fight is one that is very similar to that of tobacco safety, including secondary effects on those in close proximity, and the tactics of minimization and raising doubt are lining up to be the same. Please learn all you can,² and join me in urging passage of this landmark legislation. It could be a very tough struggle against a multi-trillion dollar industry, and Maine, a beautiful but poor State, needs your strength to help push open this heavy door through which other States, and the nation as a whole may, hopefully, pass. 

Andrea Boland is a National Health Federation member and a member of the Maine House of Representatives, where she is considered a leader in advocating for wellness and prevention, caution in the use of vaccines, local rights to create ordinances protecting citizens from overreaching by multinational corporations, and transparency and public approval for large scale economic development. She is a member of the State and Local Government Committee, and has served on the Government Oversight Committee. She is in her second term in office.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 See "Cellphones and Brain Tumors, 15 Reasons for Concern" at <http://www.radiationresearch.org/pdfs/15reasons.asp>. These facts appear on page 9 of the report, while an illustration of the emissions entering the brain can be found at page 25.
- 2 There are many websites you can visit to learn more, such as www.environmentalhealthtrust.org, www.bioinitiative.org, www.microwavenews.com, www.thepeoplesinitiative.org, where you can sign a petition supporting this work, www.electromagnetichealth.org, and <http://www.wiredchild.org>, or just research cellphones and brain cancer. There is a brief video clip that summarizes the problem at <http://omega.twoday.net/stories/5892308/>. U.S. Senators Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Arlen Specter (D-PA) recently held congressional hearings on the subject. The website www.cabta.org is provided by a young man who worked for former Senator Ted Kennedy, and learned of his brain tumor and that of his own father's at just about the same time. His father has survived the surgery, but at great continuing pain, suffering, and cost to him and the family.