

Alicia McAvay 113 Shaw St New London, CT

Testimony in favor of Bill 461: An Act Concerning Teen Pregnancy Prevention

Honorable Senators and Representatives. My name is Alicia McAvay. I am the High School Program Coordinator for East Lyme's Youth Services Bureau and a concerned citizen of the City of New London. I am here today to testify in favor of Bill #461, An Act Concerning Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs. My hope is that you will support this legislation as it will benefit all CT residents and those of the future. As you have heard testimony to, The CT Department of Public Health reported the percentage of state births to teens was 6.9% in 2004. However, the rate is significantly higher in Hartford (20%), New Britain (16%), Windham (15.4%), New London (14%), New Haven (13.6%), Killingly (13.6%), Bridgeport (13.2%), Norwich (12.5%), and Putnam (9.9%). 80% of the reported 80,000 sexually active CT high school students reported that they first had sexual intercourse between 13 and 16 years of age. We need to help these teens grow into healthy adults and start healthy families when they are ready.

Those statistics and others we have heard today are alarming. However, the most important reason to vote yes to Bill 461 is that you be sending a message to Connecticut's youth that is okay to talk about sex and ask questions. My experience working with Youth Service Bureaus is that many adolescents, teens and adults are uncomfortable talking about their bodies and their sexual activity. This is dangerous. Teens are having sex and many teens are becoming parents before they are ready. Comprehensive, age appropriate, medically accurate sex education is the best form of teen pregnancy prevention. Promoting appropriate sex education will let teens know that it is okay to ask questions about their sexuality and that it is okay to be confused.

Over the last three years, I have had several conversations about sex with adolescent girls in South Eastern CT, who have approached me with a problem or concern that has come about due to inaccurate information that they have received from their peers. When educators fail to talk about sex in a holistic manner, teens and adolescents will turn to their friends for the information they seek. This leads to misinformation, misconceptions and ultimately risky sexual behavior and teen pregnancy. Only comprehensive sex education that discusses both abstinence and contraception will lower the rates of teen pregnancy.

As a program coordinator in one of CT Youth Service Bureaus, I look forward to planning youth driven medically accurate comprehensive sex education programs in order to help CT teens avoid risky sexually behavior and make good decisions about their bodies. I ask you to please make that possible.

The youth of CT are the future of CT and we owe it to the state's residents to insure our future is safe, happy, and healthy.

Thank You.

I will now answer any questions.