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Good Afternoon, Chairmans Senator Gaffey and Representative Fleischmann and honorable members of the Committee. My name is Erin Soli and I am a student at the UCONN School of Social Work. I am here today to testify on bill No. 5591, An Act Concerning Healthy Teens. I am in favor of the Healthy Teens Act and urge you today to protect the health of our youth by supporting this legislation.

Very few teens receive accurate information on safe sex practices and engage in sex. 80% of Connecticut high school students between the age of 13 and 16 report they have had sex. That is 80% of our kids that are at risk for sexually transmitted diseases like AIDS, Chlamydia, Gonorrhea and much more. This is not a number I want to take any chances with.

I can remember not too long ago when I was in school. I was fortunate enough to have Sex-education in health class. While the curriculum was brief and limited, it was better than what was being discussed at home. My parents did not talk to me about sexually transmitted diseases or safe-sex practices nor did most of my friends' parents. When I was in school my class-mates engaged in sexual activities. Kids did not take STD's and pregnancy seriously, we thought, "that won't happen to me". But it did happen to some of my classmates.

While you may wish, as do I, that the youth make the best choice to protect themselves by choosing abstinence, that is not reality. Young people are going to have sex now as they did when I was in school, and on behalf of the youth I want to say we have the right to sexual health information to protect ourselves and the safety of our futures. Please support the Healthy Teens Act.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. I would be happy to answer any questions.