

Testimony of Melissa D. Busher
Education Committee ~ RB#5591: "An Act Concerning Healthy Teens"
1 March 2008

Good afternoon, my name is Melissa Busher and I am currently a senior at Central Connecticut State University majoring in Sociology. Thank you for raising the Healthy Teens bill #5591. As a young adult, comprehensive sex education is something I personally wish I had available to me during my teenage years. I am confident to say that many of my twenty-something peers will also make the same claim. My personal research at CCSU about sources of adolescent sexual knowledge as well as, my personal concern for the Healthy Teens Act, brings me here today. The respondents of my survey conducted on campus in the Spring of 2006 included young adults between the ages of 18-25 who self reported that their sexual knowledge was initially obtained between the ages of 10-17 and that their top three sources of this sexual knowledge were found at school (81%), from friends (79%), and TV (61%). Of the respondents who did take some form of sex education in public schools, 68% report being merely satisfied with their experience.

As a component of my undergraduate honor's thesis about sex education in Connecticut public schools, I am in the process of completing observations in health classes of two secondary schools in the state. The observations of the health curriculum alone are alarming because one of the schools obviously presents a more comprehensive curriculum than the other. I cannot help but think while observing the classes that it is unfair for some students to receive much lesser quality health information because of the place they live. As it happens the students receiving lower quality information are from the lesser performing school and community with economic disparities to begin with.

It seems contradictory that a population which stands behind the value of public education would chose not to educate their young citizens about a subject area that not only effects their everyday lives, but could also potentially remedy a variety of "social problems." Having no funding or guidelines for comprehensive sex education is putting young people at a disadvantage because they are forced to learn about their sexuality from the media, their misinformed friends, and from their own experiences or mistakes.

There is an abundance of research that concludes many members of society, including youth, parents, public health and educational organizers, mainstream medical associations, and health care providers, all agree that providing a medically accurate, age appropriate, comprehensive sexual education program to youth is a "basic human right".¹ Additionally, this research finds that providing comprehensive sex education delays the on-set of sexual activity for teenagers.² Comprehensive sex education allows young people to reduce the risk of potentially negative outcomes in their lives concerning sexuality, such as unwanted pregnancy or contraction of disease (STI and HIV/AIDS), and helps develop invaluable decision-making skills that will enhance the quality of life.

¹ Advocates for Youth

² SIECUS

Public Hearing Testimony

Speaker:

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Date: 2/29/08 Bill Number: 5591

It is my hope as an American young adult that Connecticut will be one of the leaders in this country advocating for the rights of young people. That Connecticut will choose to provide all of its children with the opportunity to receive comprehensive sexuality education during their most influential years by passing the Healthy Teens Act and altering the language of the bill to narrow its focus to sexual related health.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

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