

My name is Judy Singer and I would like to submit testimony regarding Raised Bill 5591, An Act Concerning Healthy Teens, on behalf of the 900 members of the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) of Connecticut.

The National Council of Jewish Women of Connecticut joined the Healthy Teens Coalition in order to promote real sexuality education in Connecticut's public schools. Last spring, NCJW launched a national campaign called **Plan A**, which cites the importance of medically accurate sexuality education. The National Council of Jewish Women believes that in order to make responsible, healthy decisions, young people need, and society has a moral obligation to provide, medically accurate, age-appropriate information about sex and sexuality. Comprehensive sexuality education teaches that abstinence is the only sure way to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, but also provides accurate information about contraceptive options so that individuals can make informed life decisions. With that in mind, I urge this committee to revisit the language of this bill to specify that the healthy teens education grant program will be used for medically accurate, age-appropriate sexuality education.

Comprehensive programs about sexuality are effective. These programs have demonstrated effectiveness in delaying the onset of sexual intercourse, reducing the number of sexual partners and increasing contraception and condom use. This is not a time to be squeamish about imparting accurate information because it has been proven that this education can and does save lives¹.

The Connecticut Legislature, which has shown leadership on so many critical issues, must acknowledge the seriousness of recent statistics which show increasing rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections in our state. Do we have the will to pass legislation which will provide our youth with the knowledge that they need to avoid these outcomes?

Recent polling shows that most adults support a comprehensive approach to sexuality education - one that provides information about abstinence and contraception. Seventy-eight percent of those polled favor allowing public schools to provide students with birth control information. On February 26, 2008, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs²,

¹ Effective programs include material that is age appropriate and medically accurate, does not teach or promote religion, teaches that abstinence is the only sure way to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, provides comprehensive information about health benefits and side effects of all contraceptive methods as they relate to both pregnancy and risk reduction for STDs and HIV/AIDS, encourages family communication about sexuality, teaches interpersonal negotiation skills for young people and teaches young people how alcohol and drug use can affect decision-making.

² The Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA) serves as the representative voice of the organized American Jewish community in addressing the mandate of the Jewish community relations field. The mandate is expressed in two, interrelated goals:

1. to safeguard the rights of Jews here, in Israel, and around the world; and, in order to accomplish that,
2. to promote and pluralistic.

Public Hearing Testimony

Speaker:

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Date: 2/29/08 Bill Number: 5591

at its annual meeting, passed a resolution in favor of comprehensive sexuality education in public schools. The resolution states that the community relations field should support legislation at the state and federal level that provides funding for comprehensive sexuality education in the public schools.

NCJW believes that it is our responsibility to inform the young people in our state of all of all their options. Education is the key to making informed and responsible decisions. I believe in the legislature in my state, and that once you really understand the significant difference that real facts can make for our children's lives that you will pass a bill that provides grants for real sexuality education.

The National Council of Jewish Women is a volunteer organization that has been at the forefront of social change for over a century. Inspired by Jewish values, NCJW courageously takes a progressive stance on issues such as child welfare, women's rights, and reproductive freedom.

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