NARAL
Pro-Choice Connecticut

Education Committee
Testimony of Jillian Gilchrest, Executive Director
NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut
March 15, 2010

HB 5489, An Act Concerning Secondary School Reform
NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut is a statewide non-profit organization that uses the political process to ensure that women have the right to make personal decisions regarding the full range of reproductive health choices, including preventing unintended pregnancy, bearing healthy children, and choosing legal abortion.

NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut has joined the Healthy Teens coalition in support of HB 5489, An Act Concerning Secondary School Reform; in particular we support a one credit graduation requirement in comprehensive health education which includes developmentally appropriate comprehensive sexuality education.

Currently, Connecticut is one of fourteen states that do not require health education as a graduation requirement. Without a state health education requirement, schools may choose to cut or eliminate health education from their school's budget during difficult economic times such as these. The Connecticut State Board of Education believes that a coordinated approach to school health effectively aligns health and education efforts and leads to improved physical, mental and developmental outcomes for students, as do we.

In Connecticut, our low income and minority residents experience staggering reproductive health disparities, including greater risk of obesity, teen pregnancy, smoking, heart disease, poor prenatal care, and the list goes on and on. It is critical to teach health to our children as part of their ongoing education so they can develop the skills they need to make healthy choices.

The one credit graduation requirement in health education is part of a comprehensive package of school reform measures included in this bill that support Connecticut's commitment to the national Common Core Standards Initiative and enhances our chances of receiving federal Race to the Top funds. Please support HB 5489, An Act Concerning Secondary School Reform and ensure that Connecticut students receive health education.

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