

## Testimony before The Education Committee

In Support of H.B. 5489, An Act Concerning Secondary School Reform  
Submitted by Erin Smith  
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March 15, 2010

Dear Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleishman and members of the Education Committee.

I am a research assistant for the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund and am here to ask for your support in secondary school reform. There are many aspects of this bill that would enhance the education experience of Connecticut's students and lead them to success.

I would like to mention the importance of the full credit of comprehensive health education requirement. I cannot think of a more vital aspect of education than comprehensive health. How can we expect to have our students be successful if they are engaging in unhealthy behaviors like smoking cigarettes or unprotected sex? The Connecticut School Health Survey was administered by the Connecticut Department of Public Health in collaboration with the State Department of Education, and other collaborating state agencies and school districts. The 2007 analysis of these surveys found that high risk behaviors lend themselves to other behaviors that are dangerous for students and inhibit them from leading healthy and successful lives. For example, high school students who described their grades in schools in the past 12 months as mostly Cs (55.7%) or mostly Ds or Fs (61.6%) are significantly more likely than those who describe their grades as mostly As (32.9%) or mostly Bs (47.7%) to drink alcohol. On another health related topic, approximately 41,700 (25.6%) high school students are overweight and students who were teased about their physical appearance at least once in the 12 months prior to the survey were found to be significantly more likely than students who were not teased to have engaged in unhealthy dietary behaviors in the past 30 days like fasting (21.8% and 8.7%); and using laxatives or diet pills and vomiting (14% and 5.7%)<sup>[1]</sup>. Comprehensive health education can teach students the life skills they need to be productive and successful and can assist in turning them away from dangerous behaviors.

Using the *Healthy and Balanced Living Curriculum Framework* developed by the Connecticut State Department of Education, would ensure that students are educated in the numerous areas of health education including but not limited to physical education; nutrition; goal-setting skills; responsible behavior; sexual health; healthy physical and emotional school environment. We need to support our students in every way possible by requiring a full credit of comprehensive health education.

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[1] Connecticut Department of Public Health. (2009). *2007 Connecticut School Health Survey*. Hartford, CT. Retrieved from [http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/hisr/pdf/cshs\\_2007\\_report.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/hisr/pdf/cshs_2007_report.pdf)