

Testimony Program Review and Investigations Committee
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H. B. No. 5165 (RAISED) An Act Concerning High School Graduation Requirements

Good afternoon Senator Kissel, Representative Mushinsky, members of the committee. My name is Corey Kwiecienski and I currently a Masters of Social Work intern at the Connecticut AIDS Resource Coalition.

I am a member of the Healthy Teen Coalition who advocating for requiring a full credit of comprehensive health education a requirement for high school graduation. Connecticut is only 1 of 14 states in which comprehensive health education is NOT a requirement. The Connecticut State Board of Education believes that a coordinated approach to school health effectively aligns with health and education and leads to improve physical, mental and developmental outcomes for students.

In 2008 polling showed 83% of CT voters think that with pressures mounting on our teens, sex education that includes information about abstinence and birth control can't be put off. An estimated 80,000 CT high school students report they have had sexual intercourse and nearly 80% first had sexual intercourse between the ages of 13 and 16. However research has shown that developmentally appropriate, evidenced based, sexuality education can delay the first experience of sexual intercourse and increase condom use.

Teens and young adults under the age of 25 continue to be at risk for HIV and most young people are infected through unprotected sex. African Americans are disproportionately affected by HIV infection; accounting for 55% of all HIV infections reported among persons aged 13-24. The lifetime per person HIV care cost is now \$618,900. In 2009 18% of newly reported HIV infections in Connecticut occurred in people between the ages of 13 -29.

72% (8,285) of reported Chlamydia cases in CT in 2007 were among young people aged 10-24. Left untreated, Chlamydia is a major contributor to infertility later in life. 57% (1,329) of reported Gonorrhea cases in CT in 2007 were among young people aged 10-24.

Last year, I facilitated a sexuality group with a consisting of adolescent females who were incarcerated. It was disturbing and quite sad the lack of knowledge these girls had about their own bodies. While working for an agency providing HIV counseling and testing services to high risk individuals, a number of young people would not know even basic information about HIV. These individuals have been alive the entire spam of this epidemic, however due to lack of education, they were unaware of how HIV is transmitted.

It is imperative that school and family collaboration takes place regarding health education not only in high school but starting as early as Pre-K. As the future step mother to two girls ages 11 and 13, I want to ensure they are getting the information that they need not only from me and their father but from the schools they attend as well and avoid becoming one of the above mentioned statistics.

By denying our teens this information we are putting their health and well being at risk. I urge you to support the 1 credit of comprehensive health education. This will ensure ALL teens in the state of Connecticut are getting the information and knowledge to keep them healthy.

I would like to thank you for your time and the opportunity to be heard.