

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee:

My name is Tessa Marquis. I am a volunteer at NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut. I have submitted written testimony to this committee from the President of NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut, who is also a teacher in New Haven. She could not be here today.

For myself, I am not a parent, but I am always concerned about the youth in our community.

I am a former Board member of the Milford Chamber of Commerce, where I chaired and then co-chaired the Scholarship Committee and the Middle School mini-grant program for young entrepreneurs. I have been active on the curriculum committee for the Computer department at Platt Tech, and I have hired over 70 high school and college students as interns and part-time employees at my company over the past 20 years.

Whenever I am with younger people I try to get them to talk to me. I have consistently found them to be compassionate to others and, with a few exceptions, eager to learn and become educated.

However, there are gaps in their education. They still seem to learn most life lessons through their peers.

Luckily, there are people working to fill the gaps in Adolescent Health Care, both inside Government and from outside organizations who struggle for exposure and funding. Anything that the Legislature can do to bring these initiatives into the education system of Connecticut will be monumental in effectiveness.

- Mary Ann Wasil Nilan is the founder of the Get In Touch Foundation, which teaches girls in 5th to 12th grade how to do breast self examinations and learn about having a healthy body. This program is now in some – but not all – of the schools in Connecticut. My fervent hope is that it becomes a nation-wide initiative and saves many lives.
- Paid Sick Leave has been an exciting new development in our state, since it identifies a key health problem in the schools: When a child is ill, the caregiver can rarely stay home to provide care for the child, since it will mean a loss of pay. Sending kids and teens to school sick adds to transmission of illness and mini-epidemics.

School nurses will be praising the enactment of this law and I hope we will see less communicable diseases in the schools.

- The work of the Transgender Alliance and True Colors has been vitally important in making life more comfortable for LGBTQ youth, who face high levels of harassment, family rifts, and bullying which too often result in suicide.

Emotionally secure and healthy young people - of all natures - are a vital component to the future of our state and our country. A goal of our civilized community should be to ensure a safe school environment to all students. This is a subject which can be integrated into daily courses as well as the health sciences.

In conclusion, Adolescent Health Care means making sure that young people have access to services and information to keep them healthy and safe. I think we can continue to concentrate on these positives and eliminate the negative.

Thank you for your time.

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