

June 21, 2011

Program Review and Investigations Committee
Adolescent Health Care Information Forum and Public Hearing

Good afternoon, Members of the Committee. My name is Janice Andersen. For over 20 years I have worked at a non-profit that seeks to ensure the safe and healthy development of youth, young adults and families. I have also served as the Co-Chair of the Connecticut Children's Behavioral Health Advisory Council, better known as CCBHAC and I am also the mother of two daughters.

I believe it is time for our state to make fighting teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases a priority. The best way to do that is for the legislature to enact a program that teaches comprehensive sex education in our schools.

Many parents don't talk with their children about sex, because they are uncomfortable, don't know what to say, and mistakenly think that schools are doing the job. However, Connecticut has no mandated comprehensive sexuality education in schools.

A 2010 study released by The Guttmacher Institute is the latest evidence we face an adolescent-reproductive health crisis, with one in four teenage girls having a sexually transmitted disease and one-third of teenage girls becoming pregnant before reaching the age of 20.

Our teens need accurate information to stay healthy and protect themselves from STDs and unintended pregnancy. We need to ensure that teens have the accurate information they need to make responsible decisions to help them prevent unintentional pregnancy and avoid sexually-transmitted diseases.

Research shows that teenagers who receive sex education that includes discussions on contraception are more likely than those who receive abstinence-only messages to delay sexual activity and to use contraceptives and condoms when they do become sexually active. In addition, the overwhelming weight of scientific evidence suggests that addressing abstinence and contraception does not increase sexual activity.

The American Medical Association, amongst many other respected public health professional organizations, solidly endorse providing comprehensive sex education that offers information about a range of sexual health and contraceptive options—it is time the State of Connecticut does the same.

I thank you for your time today and your consideration.

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