

February 21, 2012

Testimony of Pierrette Silverman, Vice President, Education & Training,

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Regarding Governor's Bill No. 24 AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS

Good afternoon Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee. Unintended parenthood is a leading cause of school dropout among teen girls. About half (51%) of teen mothers have a high school diploma compared to 89% of women who didn't have a teen birth.¹ Further data suggests that less than two percent of young teen mothers (those who have a child before the age 18) attain a college degree by the age of 30.²

We also know that the children of teen parents do not perform as well as children of older mothers on measures of child development and school readiness such as cognition, language and communication, and interpersonal skills.³ In order to close the achievement gap and diminish the cycle of poverty, we need to consider pregnancy and parenthood, which are often neglected yet, are important pieces to developing strategies for reducing high dropout rates.

Given the close connection between teen pregnancy and educational attainment, it is essential that teen pregnancy prevention and school completion initiatives be addressed in tandem. If we prevent teen pregnancies we will help young people succeed in school.

In order for young people to make informed decisions, it is imperative that we support their learning around sexual health by providing information on contraception, sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS, building their communication and negotiating skills to assist them in delaying sexual activity and providing opportunities to clarify their values and beliefs around sex and sexuality.

We also need to provide skills and supports to parents, teachers, coaches, and other caretakers in order to effectively communicate about sexual health education.

Sec. 18. Section 10-223e of the 2012 supplement to the general statutes (*Effective July 1, 2012*) Section E states that in order to improve student performance:

¹ Perper, K., Peterson, K., & Manlove, J., *Diploma Attachment Among Teen Mothers*, 2010. Child Trends, Fact Sheet: Washington, DC. Retrieved March, 2010 from http://www.childtrends.org/Files//Child_Trends-2010_01_22_FS_DiplomaAttainment.pdf

² Hoffman, S.D., *By the Numbers: The Public Costs of Adolescent Childbearing*. 2006, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy Washington, DC.

³ Terry-Humen, E., Manlove, J., & Moore, K., *Playing catch-up: How the children of teen mothers fare*. 2005, National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy: Washington, DC.

(E) require additional training and technical assistance for parents and guardians of children attending the school or a school in the district and for teachers, principals, and central office staff members hired by the district;

We propose that the State Department of Education establish a healthy teens education grant program whereby local and regional boards of education may apply for a grant to (1) develop, review and approve methods of professional development for staff who will teach such health education (2) offer appropriate training for teachers and parents and guardians in parent-child communication strategies.

Successful school retention, completion and achievement will improve the lives of young men and women who will be more prepared as they forge ahead and become successful members of our community and economy. Thank you.