



Education Committee

Testimony of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund
Senate Bill No. 378: *An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the High School Graduation
Requirements Task Force*

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The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women, children, and their families to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives. Please accept this testimony reflecting CWEALF's concerns about Senate Bill No. 378: *An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the High School Graduation Requirements Task Force*.

CWEALF strongly believes that teens should be provided with comprehensive, medically-accurate sexual health education at school. Part of our Research & Evaluation work includes a collaboration on the Hartford Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative, a program geared toward using education to inform teens about sexual and reproductive health, encourage their health and safety, and reduce the teen pregnancy rate. The proposed elimination of the ½ credit for health education, a component of which is sexual health education, will make it less likely that students will receive the sexual health education that they very much need.

Students are already not receiving enough sexual health education under the current requirements. Eliminating the ½ credit for health education will exacerbate this problem, making sexual health classes susceptible to being cut from the curriculum when budgetary concerns arise.

Teens should be empowered to make their own decisions about sexual activity, and this proposed bill could leave students without the sexual health education that they need to understand consent and how to assert sexual boundaries.

Furthermore, without sexual health education, fewer teens would know about the range of contraception methods and how to avoid unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. The 2013 Connecticut Youth Risk Behavior Survey showed that 8.9% of the sexually active male high school students surveyed had gotten someone pregnant one or more times. This percentage could rise if sexual health education is eliminated. Sexual health education is necessary so that every individual can effectively prevent pregnancy and STIs, and understand their options should those situations arise.

We urge you to reconsider eliminating the ½ credit for health education. Sexual health education needs be expanded, not cut.

Thank you for your consideration.