

Dear Members of the High School Graduation Requirements Task Force

I write to submit for your consideration my thoughts on SB 378. I cannot be present for the public testimony on this bill, as I am a professor at the University of Connecticut and have classes to teach that day, but it is this very role that brings me to send you this letter.

Every year I work with students who are missing the most basic elements of health education, particularly around sexual health. A great deal of my time both in class and outside of it is spent educating young adults on things they could have learned in high school, before they left home for their first independent living experiments. They are *at risk* when they are missing this education. They are at risk for over-drinking, they are at risk for eating foods that are unhealthy and yet are widely available on my own and all college (as well as high school) campuses; for many students, their stress levels increase tremendously as they struggle to balance new academic and work requirements with new independence; and their sexual health is increasingly at risk. My students are smart; but many of them are simply not adequately prepared to understand their own life-long health needs.

Additionally, I am the parent of two young adolescents who will be finishing high school in the next 5 to 7 years. I can attest personally to how difficult it is for many parents, myself included, to add “health education” to the work of parenting; many parents may not have the knowledge or skill themselves, but equally important, many teenagers simply do not want to be educated by their parents. We rely on schools to partner with us in this.

Removing health education, already sorely constricted in my opinion, from the requirements to graduate high school removes this public service from our Connecticut communities, puts our young adults at even greater risk. I urge you to retain the very minimal ½ credit of required health education our high school students are required to take – for their sakes.

Thank you.

Dr. Barbara Gurr

Barbara Gurr  
Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program  
University of Connecticut