March 5, 2016

S.B. 378 (Raised) An Act Concerning the Recommendation of the High School Graduation Requirements Task Force..

Dear Members of the Education Committee:

As a Health teacher I am concerned about the potential impact of S.B. 378, which calls for the elimination of .5 health education credit from the state graduation requirement. I am writing to urge you to vote "NO" on this bill (or reject this bill).

The proposed bill will negatively impact quality Health Education in Connecticut and the well-being of our younger generations in the following ways:

I. Loss of Title IV funding. Removal of the credit will negate the new ESSA law in which health just became recognized as a critical component to a student's "well rounded" education with the availability of funding opportunities.
II. Without a required comprehensive quality Health Education requirement, student behaviors such as smoking, heavy drinking, school misbehavior, drugs and violence will become more prevalent in our state.
III. Loss of support under the The Affordable Care Act in Health Education that teaches students to self-advocate and make healthy choices.

If we want to build a healthier Connecticut, we must celebrate the recognition of health under ESSA as a critical component of a student's education instead of eliminating it. Research has shown that quality health and physical education instruction improves student attendance, test scores, participation, motivation to learn and reduces discipline referrals. Evidence also shows that effective school health education provide students with a foundation for a lifetime of health, wellness and character development.

Teachers help promote the social and emotional learning skills students need to be college and career ready, such as collaborating with others, monitoring their own behavior, and making responsible decisions. Social-emotional learning is critical to the introduction of college and career readiness standards, which increase the demands on students' ability to engage in deeper learning and shift the focus and rigor of instruction (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices [NGA Center] & Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2010a; NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010b). Health Education plays a critical role in this process. It provides the opportunities for students to develop and practice the following health life skills which directly relate to the development of the whole child through social and emotional learning. These skills include: **Decision-making, Goal Setting, Communication Skills, Resisting Peer Pressure, Assertiveness, Knowing, Recognizing & Managing Emotions, Anger & Stress Management, Relationship Skills, Social Awareness & Empathy, Appreciating Diversity, Using Resources, Analyzing Influences and Health Advocacy.**

I urge you to make a firm commitment on the health of our future generations and vote “NO” on S.B 378. Your continued support of quality health education along with health education credit as a requirement for graduation will set the standard for promoting healthier schools and Connecticut.

Thank you for your time and service as a member of the education committee for Connecticut.

Sincerely,

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