

Testimony Against HB-1032 in its current form

Sex education in public schools should strive to improve the physical and psychological health of students while fostering their future educational and socioeconomic success. To achieve this, schools need to achieve three interrelated goals: delay sexual debut, prevent unintended pregnancies, and reduce transmission of STDs. This applies to both heterosexual and LGBTQ students.

Comprehensive sex education can promote the inherent dignity and worth of every human being regardless of their sex, gender identification or sexual orientation. It can provide students with strategies to deter bullying, deal with unwanted sexual overtures, and prevent sexual assault. Most importantly, effective comprehensive sex education promotes abstinence while arming students with medically accurate and scientifically adjudicated knowledge about the risks/benefits of barrier, hormonal, and LARC contraceptive methods. It should build on the positive national trend towards reduced high school sexually activity. [The Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that over 60% of high school youths remained sexually abstinent in 2017].

House Bill 19-1032 fails to meet these standards. It prohibits sex education from “explicitly or implicitly” incorporating the views of any religious perspective while purporting to be “culturally sensitive”. Moreover, it specifically prohibits promoting abstinence as the “**primary**” method to prevent early sexual initiation, pregnancy, and STDs. This basically reduces comprehensive sex education to a neutral, cafeteria-style menu from which students (who are physically/emotionally immature) are supposed to select the strategy which is best for them. This is moral relativism at its worst.

It is also very telling that the authors of the bill chose to remove previous language that ensured that the material that was taught adhered to rigorous evidence-based methodology and led to important objective goals (including “delaying sexual initiation, reducing the frequency of sexual intercourse, reducing the number of sexual partners or increasing the use of condoms and other contraceptives”). Rather, they chose to emphasize material that met with the approval of **very political** professional organizations such as the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecologists.

Finally, it would be better to defer these decisions to the local school districts and school boards. Subsidiarity is an important principle in government and should be followed in formulating a comprehensive sex education program for a wide spectrum of rural and urban school districts with very different student population and sexual educational needs.

I encourage lawmakers to improve or withdraw this bill, rather than foist it on Colorado students and families in its present form.

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