

Sandra Caron  
Orono  
LD 254

From: Sandra Caron, 3 University Place, Orono, ME 04473  
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Re: Support for LD 254, An Act to Update the Sex Education and Consent Curriculum.

Sen. Rafferty, Sen. Brennan, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Dr. Sandra Caron and I live in Orono. I am writing in support of LD 254 An Act to Update the Sex Education and Consent Curriculum.

I am a Professor of Family Relations and Human Sexuality at the University of Maine. I am responsible for teaching the large lecture course on human sexuality, as well as the online version of the course.

Through my research and work with young adults for the past 36 years, I understand firsthand the positive impact of comprehensive sexuality education on the health and well-being of adolescents and young adults.

I am in my 36th year of teaching and have taught over 25,000 students. Most of my students have been from Maine. In my experience, these students come to college with many unanswered questions about human sexuality - often embarrassed by what they see as their excessive ignorance and fearing ridicule of others if they openly seek the information they need.

It is clear from the students that their sexuality education has been "too little, too late, and too biological." Although Maine has prided itself on having a comprehensive approach to sexuality education, this education is inconsistent and needs more funding. It needs to be provided by trained educators who support a diverse and inclusive curriculum. Young people need this information to make safe decisions about their health and relationships. Sexuality education should not be left to chance or ignorance.

There are many reasons to support this legislation since we know that sex education plays an important role in the lives of young people. It helps to prepare them for upcoming stages of development, increases comfort with the topic of sexuality, and increases the attitude that sexuality is a normal part of human existence. It also increases the skills they will need to live happy, responsible lives as sexual beings. Even more important for today's youth, it provides responsible answers to questions and concerns in an age when the media bombards them with sexual images and misinformation.

Talking about sex does not cause it to happen. Learning about sex in age-appropriate increments is the best defense against the unhappy consequences of being exposed to "too much, too soon." Young people, guided by their school's sex education program, are armed with knowledge and self-confidence to make informed decisions and direct their sexual destinies.

We need to do a better job. This legislation is important in terms of supporting our efforts to expand and improve comprehensive sexuality education in our state. We know most people support sex education. We know most people support LD 254.

I'd like to thank the committee members for considering the importance of LD 254 to our young people.