

131st Legislature
Senate of
Maine
Senate District 23

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Testimony of Senator Mattie Daughtry introducing
LD 254, An Act to Update the Sex Education and Consent Curriculum
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education
January 9, 2024

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Esteemed Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education, my name is Mattie Daughtry, and I proudly represent Senate District 23, which includes Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, Pownal, Chebeague Island, and part of Yarmouth. I am pleased to introduce LD 254, “An Act to Update the Sex Education and Consent Curriculum.”

Ensuring our schools have the best access to quality curriculum and resources is something we are all passionate about. For those of you who have served with me for a while you know I am passionate about ensuring that our health and sex education is up to date, age-appropriate, and rooted in science and best practices. I worked with some of you to change our guidance around consent to be affirmative consent. Having worked as a peer sex educator in high school and college, I have been passionate about this subject for a while and throughout my legislative career I have tried to stay up to date myself on what our educators and students need in this topic. Originally this bill was put in as a possible vehicle to update some of our laws and continue to modernize health education. I ask for this bill to be carried over as I continued to have conversations with educators, students, and experts about what is and isn't working. As these conversations progressed it became inherently clear that resources, not a curriculum change, is what is needed. The final bill idea before you addresses that.

Maine has a long history of providing comprehensive sex education in school settings. In MRS Title 22, Chapter 406, §1902 1-A defines Comprehensive family life education:

1-A. Comprehensive family life education. "Comprehensive family life education" means education in kindergarten to grade 12 regarding human development and sexuality, including education on family planning and sexually transmitted diseases, that is medically accurate and age appropriate; that respects community values and encourages parental communication; that develops skills in communication, decision making and conflict resolution; that contributes to healthy relationships; that promotes responsible sexual behavior with an emphasis on abstinence; that addresses the use of contraception; that promotes individual responsibility and involvement regarding

sexuality; and that teaches skills for responsible decision making regarding sexuality. [2001, c. 654, §1 (NEW).]

A 2019 Maine law also requires affirmative consent to be delivered at the secondary level. We all agree that students should be taught about their right to give—or withdraw—consent in any circumstance. Right now, it's up to parents and teachers to work together to educate Maine's children on this important concept. That's how it should be.

I am not proposing any shifts in current law, I am just proposing giving educators the tools they need to meet it.

Maine educators deserve resources so they can deliver comprehensive, evidence-based, sexual health education that meets Maine laws and health education standards. Teachers and our schools deserve up-to-date resources, curricula, professional development, and support.

Local Control. This is an important part of Maine's public education system. In the case of comprehensive sexual health education, this means that this often-perceived sensitive topic may or may not be delivered in schools, and can vary widely in content, quantity, and quality. As a result, Maine students often leave high school without the knowledge and skills to make sexually healthy decisions. We hear this time and again from young people when asked informally and through surveys how they would rate the sexual health education they receive in school.

Demand for Sexual Health Education. The demand has increased in the past decade while funding for education programming has remained flat-funded. With an ever-growing increase in requests from health teachers, administrators, school nurses, and counselors, there is a clear, urgent need for sexual health education training, resources, guidance, and technical assistance so that schools can deliver the comprehensive sex education that young people deserve.

Curriculum Development and Support to Educators. It is important that three popular and commonly used curricula are reviewed and updated occasionally: *Puberty Happens* for older elementary grades, *Middle School Sexual Health Scope & Sequence*, and *Best Practices in HIV/STI and Pregnancy Prevention* for the secondary level. These three evidence-informed, age-appropriate curricula are used in schools throughout the state by health educators at each grade level. Currently, the curricula are available free of charge digitally. With current funding levels, these resources can no longer be printed and disseminated as binder copies of the curricula. STD and HIV Prevention Education staff have limited time to make regularly needed updates to these resources.

Professional Development for Educators. In their formal education, the majority of health educators do not receive specific training in teaching sexual health and need professional development to increase their knowledge, comfort, and skills in delivering sexual health education. At the elementary level, it is often the school nurse and counselor who provide puberty education, for which they often need professional development and support. A strong state public education system includes professional development available for teachers, with in-person training options and costs covered and/or virtual webinars on specific topics.

Attached, you will find the allocation breakdown for what investments need to be made to keep Maine's sex ed program strong and support the educators who are doing this great work – all while preserving Maine's proud tradition of local control for public schools.

I welcome any questions you may have.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mattie".

Mattie Daughtry

Assistant Senate Majority Leader, Senate District 23

Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, Pownal, Chebeague Island, and part of Yarmouth

SENATOR DAUGHTRY (SPONSOR) PROPOSED AMENDMENT ON LD 254, AN ACT TO UPDATE THE SEX EDUCATION AND CONSENT CURRICULUM

This proposed amendment would strike and replace the concept draft with an appropriations/allocations section to provide \$500,000 starting in the second year of the biennium to DOE to contract for services to provide comprehensive sex education.

The following provides a detailed breakdown of the intent of this funding:

PROPOSED ALLOCATIONS TO MAINE'S SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAM

- 1. Filling the current funding gap in providing education programs. \$45,000**
 - a. Current program is funded at \$194,000, with 2 FTE staff, expected to meet education and training needs of schools and educators statewide.
 - b. Current funding does not cover support for two Prevention Education staff salaries/benefits, travel, supplies, professional development, and meeting expenses.

- 2. Increase Prevention Education staffing by 3 FTE (including travel, staff professional development, supplies, and other related costs). \$265,000**
 - a. Create an Assistant Director of Prevention (1 FTE) to oversee community collaborations with prevention education organizations and youth development programs to enhance and expand comprehensive sex education throughout the state. Oversee the work of Prevention Coordinators and Outreach and Communications Coordinator.
 - b. Add one Prevention Coordinator (1 FTE) to provide support to Maine schools in identifying and delivering age-appropriate, medically-accurate curriculum resources and lesson plans that fit with community expectations and values.
 - c. Create an Outreach and Communications Coordinator position (1 FTE) to oversee social media, materials development, and youth engagement.

- 3. Develop and disseminate sexual health curricula and resources. \$40,000**
 - a. Provide regular updates of the current sexual health curricula that meet Maine health education standards and Maine's definition of family life education. This includes hiring graphic designer to provide layout/design of the curricula.
 - b. Print copies and disseminate curricula at no cost to educators.
 - c. Create digital and print materials such as school administrator talking points, educator tip sheets, parent engagement materials, condom education materials for condom availability programs in high schools.
 - d. Provide additional resource materials and supplies to school systems to expand/improve sexual health education programs.

- 4. Expand professional development opportunities for Maine educators, school staff (nurses, counselors, administrators, etc.) and community-based organizations. \$50,000**
 - a. Consistently offer in-person training on available sexual health curricula – Puberty Happens, Middle School Scope & Sequence and Best Practices in STI/HIV and Pregnancy Prevention. Provide both in-person and virtual trainings.
 - b. Provide regular sexual health education live webinars where educators can attend from their own sites to discuss relevant topics and share information and resources

with guest speakers and their colleagues from around the state (and from outside of Maine as well).

- c. With the assistance of a digital media consultant, develop self-paced virtual modules on specific topics, including teaching tips and strategies, that educators can access at their own pace, to improve the content and quality of sexual health education. Evaluations and certificates for contact hours would be available.
- d. Expand the current annual Comprehensive Sexuality Education Conference to offer more virtual options for educators unable to attend in person.

5. Expand access to sexual health education to engage parents, youth, and underserved populations. \$100,000

- a. Recognizing that the current sexual health education programs do not reach or resonate with everyone, collaborate and contract with agencies serving youth who are LGBTQ+, from New American populations, Indigenous, neurodiverse and have other disabilities, in systems care, or are in circumstances where they lack relevant, inclusive sex education. Create materials/resources for youth, adults, parents, educators, and others working with these populations.
- b. Through these partnerships, create training modules and resource materials to expand the reach of sexual health education.
- c. Specific youth engagement initiatives will focus on ways that we can bring more youth voice to help expand and improve sexual health education in schools, and also through youth communities and social media.

Total Cost: \$500,000