



Maine Medical
Association



TESTIMONY OF THE MAINE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

AND

THE MAINE OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION

IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 254, An Act to Update the Sex Education and Consent Curriculum

Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Room 208, Cross Building, Augusta, Maine
Tuesday, January 9, 2023

Good afternoon Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Anne Sedlack, and I am the Director of Advocacy for the Maine Medical Association. I am submitting this testimony in support of LD 254, An Act to Update the Sex Education and Consent Curriculum on behalf of the Maine Medical Association and the Maine Osteopathic Association.

The Maine Medical Association (MMA) is a professional organization representing more than 4,000 physicians, residents, and medical students in Maine. MMA's mission is to support Maine physicians, advance the quality of medicine in Maine, and promote the health of all Maine people. The Maine Osteopathic Association (MOA) is a professional organization representing more than 1,200 osteopathic physicians, residents, and medical students in Maine whose mission is to serve the Osteopathic profession of the State of Maine through a coordinated effort of professional education, advocacy, and member services in order to ensure the availability of quality osteopathic health care to the people of this State.

This year MMA and MOA's legislative committees have joined together to advocate from one voice. And our Committee has determined that it is important to testify in support of LD 254 and its amended language proposed by Senator Daughtry for a number of reasons.

First, we believe that everyone deserves honest health care information. This includes accurate sexual education and a safe space to ask questions. We know that the schools are great partners in this work. We know that the sex education supported by LD 254 is medically accurate information about sexual and reproductive health and deserves to be

funded. We also appreciate the funding to expand the current sexual health education programs to create relevant and inclusive sex education for all students. If the internet is the only source of information young people have, then they will be greatly misinformed.

Second, preventing unwanted pregnancies, lowering the teen pregnancy rates and decreasing sexually transmitted infection (STI) have long been goals of the MMA and MOA and its providers. Honest information about sex has been proven to be effective in achieving both goals. Whereas, abstinence-only education has been shown in study after study to not be effective.¹ Learning about sex serves to empower young people to make informed decisions about their own body which includes whether or not to have sex.

Finally, preventing gender violence is an issue of high priority to MMA and MOA members. The sex education modules supported by this bill help our young people learn that it is okay to say no, how to respect no and what to do about sexual harassment and assault including rape and incest. This education is critical as we raise our next generation of healthy and thriving community members.

Thank you for considering the support of Maine's physician community about L.D. 254. We cannot pass up the opportunity to educate our young people about sex and reproductive health because it will affect the rest of their lives. We urge an "ought to pass" vote on this bill. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

Thank you,

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¹ See "Abstinence-only-until-marriage policies and programs: An updated position paper of the Society for Adolescent Health and medicine." *Journal of Adolescent Health*, vol. 61, no. 3, 2017, pp. 400-403, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2017.06.001>.