

# Maine Chapter

INCORPORATED IN MAINE

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



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30 Association Drive, Box 190  
Manchester, ME 04351  
office: 207-622-3374

[www.maineaap.org](http://www.maineaap.org)

January 8, 2024

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Joe Anderson. I am a resident of Portland, a hospital-based pediatrician working in Lewiston, and I serve on the board of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I am writing today in support of LD 254: An Act to Update the Sex Education and Consent Curriculum.

As pediatricians, we understand the importance of comprehensive sex education. The American Academy of Pediatrics' clinical report titled *Sexuality Education for Children and Adolescents* states the following:

*Developmentally appropriate and evidence-based education about human sexuality and sexual reproduction over time provided by pediatricians, schools, other professionals, and parents is important to help children and adolescents make informed, positive, and safe choices about healthy relationships, responsible sexual activity, and their reproductive health. Sexuality education has been shown to help to prevent and reduce the risks of adolescent pregnancy, HIV, and sexually transmitted infections for children and adolescents with and without chronic health conditions and disabilities in the United States.<sup>1</sup>*

When comprehensive sex education is offered in schools, research has shown numerous desirable outcomes, including<sup>1,2</sup>:

- A delay in the initiation of sexual intercourse
- Reduced sexual activity
- Reduced number of sexual partners
- Reduced frequency of unprotected sex
- Increased condom & contraceptive use

Comprehensive sex education has benefits beyond risk reduction measures of reducing rates of sexual activity, sexual risk behaviors, sexually transmitted infections, and unintended pregnancy. By covering a broader range of content, comprehensive sex education also helps children and adolescents to learn how to build and maintain healthy and safe relationships, to engage in healthy communication and decision-making around sex, and to understand how to access care to support their sexual and reproductive health.<sup>2</sup>

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The Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics urges the committee members to support investment in the education, health, and well-being of Maine's children and adolescents, and **vote ought to pass on LD 254.**

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Anderson DO".

Joe Anderson, DO, FAAP

Co-Chair, Advocacy Committee

Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

<sup>1</sup> Cora C. Breuner, Gerri Mattson, COMMITTEE ON ADOLESCENCE, COMMITTEE ON PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF CHILD AND FAMILY HEALTH. Sexuality Education for Children and Adolescents. *Pediatrics* August 2016; 138 (2): e20161348. 10.1542/peds.2016-1348  
[https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article-pdf/138/2/e20161348/1232351/peds\\_20161348.pdf](https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article-pdf/138/2/e20161348/1232351/peds_20161348.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> American Academy of Pediatrics. The Importance of Access to Comprehensive Sex Education. July 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/adolescent-sexual-health/equitable-access-to-sexual-and-reproductive-health-care-for-all-youth/the-importance-of-access-to-comprehensive-sex-education/>