

Katie Lutts
Litchfield
LD 254

Senator Rafferty
Representative Brennan
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the committee, my name is Katie Lutts and I'm writing to ask you to support LD 254: An Act to Update the Sex Education & Consent Curriculum.

Sex education matters to me because I am a trained Health Educator and was one in the state for 14 years. This subject matter is critical to youth- it teaches much more than STI and pregnancy prevention- this content includes consent, relationship and communication skills just to name a few!

As a high school health teacher, I loved teaching sex education because so much of the curriculum had to do with being a person, not just sexually transmitted infections, or pregnancy. With the proper curriculum & support, my students learned about consent, about personal values, about being able to find the courage to stand up for themselves, setting boundaries! Those are life skills. This curriculum is critical for youth of all kinds because the focus is no longer on heterosexual cisgender relationships- the language is expanding to include all youth and their experiences. This is the information youth need- because not all youth are engaging in sexual activity while in high school, but some are. To center the curriculum on the youth who are sexually active leaves out the majority of students in the room who need the communication skills today, the consent skills today, the decision-making skills today and maybe the pregnancy prevention skills later.

The world could be so beautiful if folks were less fearful of their bodies and how to manage them. Sex education is more than how bodies interact- there are many, many ways for bodies to engage in sexual activity. Sex education is about relationships, interacting with each other in perhaps ways that aren't sexual, but are romantic instead! It would look like youth being able to have a conversation about sex with a partner and feel safe. Many youth don't feel they have the confidence to speak about what is ok with them when it comes to their bodies. LGBTQ+ youth may be completely left out of these conversations at their school. What about students who are differently abled- those who may be paralyzed or blind or deaf- are those youth able to engage in their sex ed curriculum? Are they represented?

Talking about sex has been deemed taboo in our society. However, our youth deserve to have these skills so they can navigate their lives- to make decisions that serve them, stick to their values and beliefs, and ultimately, allow them to have healthy relationships.

If everyone had access to high-quality sex education, maybe the way we treat each other would improve. Conversations about consent would become normal in relationships. Maybe the toxic masculinity behaviors would start to decline. Perhaps the number of unintended teenage pregnancies would drop. In general, I would like to see the world become a more inclusive place for all people and for the negative associations with sex to start to fade away.

Please vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 254. Thank you for your time.

Katie Lutts
103 Buker Rd
Litchfield, ME
04350