

Senator Rafferty

Representative Brennan

Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, distinguished members of the committee, my name is Mary Record and I am writing to urge you to support LD 254: An Act to Update the Sex Education & Consent Curriculum.

As a high school health educator and a stepparent to two teenagers and an aunt to 5 young adults, sexual education is an integral part of life and needs to be addressed many times over the course of a young person's life, by more than just family members and friends. Sex ed, just like math, social studies, world language or science, needs to be taught by professionals, in addition to family and friends, so people can have comprehensive, unbiased information in a safe, respectful classroom to have access to updated, accurate and complete information on all sexual health topics. Healthy communication and relationships, affirmative consent, sexual anatomy and physiology, sexually transmitted infection prevention, testing and treatment and condoms and other forms of contraception are all vital pieces of information for any young person, even if they are choosing abstinence currently. The role of public schools is to help make all important information accurate, accessible and available for our future generations.

Growing up in Connecticut in the 1990s, we had health education every single year in high school. It included STIs and Contraception but did not include information on consent, testing and healthy relationship communication. I feel I received more education on sex ed than some of my current high school students' friends! It seems like some districts in Maine either do not have the teachers or the support from parents and administration to teach comprehensive sex education.

We need a sexuality education that has more information on testing, treatment and how to make condoms work effectively every time. We need to include different sexualities other than the default of heterosexual.

Access to quality sexuality education means we could significantly reduce our rate of STIs under age 25 (currently 1 in 2) and our rate of unwanted teenage pregnancy (highest in the world) and reduce the spread of HPV and the resulting mouth, throat, anal and cervical cancers because of it, and reduce bacterial infections like chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis and its impact on fertility. High quality sex ed can also reduce the stigma surrounding use of condoms and testing and treatment for STIs. When we all know better, we can all do better!

Please vote "ought to pass" on LD 254: An Act to Update the Sex Education & Consent Curriculum.

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