

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 Sara Schrag

My sex education felt very short and rushed—it only lasted a couple of days total. We spent one day on STDs/STIs, with a big emphasis on how "gross" they are; this lesson stigmatized STDs/STIs as a way to encourage abstinence. It made me feel afraid to get tested, because I thought that if I had an STD or STI, no one would ever want to be with me.

The second day was much better: we had an outside reproductive health organization come into class to teach about various forms of birth control. As a sixteen-year-old girl, this lesson was actually very helpful for me! I did not know about any birth control methods besides the pill at that point, and I ended up getting an IUD the next year. She also talked about the wide range of sexual orientations, which was the first time non-heterosexual relationships were acknowledged in my public-school education.

The woman who worked for the reproductive health organization was much younger than the older male gym teacher who taught my health class. She had a form for anonymous questions that she then answered in front of the class, which helped encourage students to ask questions they might otherwise be afraid to ask.

I think that more information on building healthy sexual relationships and identifying unhealthy relationships would have been helpful. I was in an abusive relationship at the end of high school/beginning of college, but I had a very difficult time verbalizing what was happening because we never discussed it in school. I think that talking about the fact that different people have different sex drives (and some people have no sex drive) also would have been helpful! There was little to no acknowledgement of ace people in my class, which perpetuated the idea that "normal" teenagers always want to have sex. I also think more information on menstruation would have been helpful, especially for people who do not have periods. Sex ed is an opportunity to destigmatize menstruation and normalize talking about them. This is especially important for young adults who do not have home environments in which they can discuss openly discuss menstruation.

I think if everyone had access to a high quality sex education, there would be less misinformation surrounding sex, women's healthcare and reproductive healthcare. I think that there would lower rates of STDs/STIs among high school and college students, because they would be more likely to use protective barriers and to get tested. I also think that it would help high school students form healthy sexual relationships in which they could better communicate and advocate for themselves.

Thank you so much for your time & attention. Please vote "ought to pass" on LD 254: An Act to Update the Sex Ed & Consent Curriculum.

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