

Wendy Novak, in favor of HB199

I'm a parent of a middle school student that experiences hate in schools, to the point we were concerned about his safety. Teaching an inclusive and comprehensive family life will help to make schools safer for ALL students. The data from the 2019 Behavioral Risk survey is clear, our LGB students are in danger in our schools. (Our Trans students are also in danger, but that data is not being collected due to push back from parents.) Teaching from an inclusive age-appropriate health framework will help students to understand that there is more than one type of family, multiple ways to express gender, not everyone is the same. If it is appropriate to teach about one type of family, or identity, it is ok to talk about others. Carroll County is using tax money to create a framework that excludes our students of color and/or LGBTQ students and families. They removed discussion about racism and intersectionality, and their impact on health care. They are refusing to allow it to be taught that it is important to treat people of all races, ethnicities, gender identities and expressions with dignity and respect, not allowed to teach it is wrong to tease or bully others based on aspects of their races, ethnicities, sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identify. Some parents think certain subjects should be left only for the parents. Not all students have parents or caregivers that can or will teach these topics. Some topics need to be covered by multiple people to make sure it is understood. Kids don't always listen to their parents. The parent saying there is no gay or trans child is not going to teach respect at home.

Another important lesson in the family life curriculum is about consent and boundaries. We need to make sure these lessons continue to be taught. This is also something some people will say should be left to parents. Not all caregivers will teach these things. Do you think Brock Turner's father taught him about consent? Do you want your child to be out on a date with someone that might not have learned about consent? Or even on a school bus? Teaching consent is a public responsibility. The things you learn about in family life will be the foundation for the rest of your life. For some, they may not continue to learn about these topics once they

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leave school. We need to make sure the students get these lessons in an age-appropriate way, early on and it is repeated throughout their educational career. Teaching about consent is so important it needs to come from multiple sources. Kids do not always listen to their parents but might from a teacher. Not all kids have families that will teach about consent. Not all parents are knowledgeable about consent. The parents that thought it might be the victim's fault because they were drinking are not going to teach that you cannot give consent while intoxicated. They are not modeling that behavior at home. Some parents have not learned about consent since they were in school and may only know outdated knowledge. I can teach my child consent, but I cannot make sure the person they sit next to on the bus has learned it, or the person they meet at a party.

The option to opt your child out is an acceptable compromise for those that do not want their children to receive an inclusive education, leaving the default to be everyone is included. Last year the state legislature enacted the Maryland Inclusive schools act, "Prohibiting County boards of education and certain schools and prekindergarten programs from taking certain discriminatory actions because of a person's race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability". If you allow certain community groups to be excluded you are saying they are not appropriate, they are not worthy to be included. You are saying that only White, heterosexuals that identify as the gender they were assigned at birth are worthy of being included. All should be included, if someone is not comfortable being a part of that, they can choose to not participate.

A comprehensive health framework is needed because not all counties are willing to provide an inclusive education. We cannot rely on counties to provide an inclusive education without being required from the state. Carroll County is already rewriting their own framework to try to keep parents from allowing their children to participate in the comprehensive health framework. They are listening to a few parents citing parent rights and taking away parents'

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rights to an inclusive education. Students everywhere need an inclusive education. Carroll county BOE created a Family Life Committee that is filled with members of parent groups that do not even believe Family Life should be taught in schools. They had applicants to the committee with experience in the health field, volunteers from Rape Crisis Intervention services, and chose parents that do not support Family Life being taught in schools. There was a standing seat for RCIS on the Family Life Committee. That seat was removed, citing that consent was covered in "Violence and prevention". Why not cover it in both places?

Without an inclusive health framework, Carroll County Public School students will not receive an inclusive education. The LGBTQ students will not be able to receive the education they need. The straight cis students will not know how to interact with people different from them. How can community members say that others should not be included because they don't approve of them? What gives one group the right to claim others cannot be included? There are parents that believe including gender identity means the curriculum is centered around gender identity. Removal of gender identity still makes it centered around gender identity, the gender identities the "Parent's Rights" groups approve of. Just the fact that it is open for debate if sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, shows discrimination. All students need to see positive representation of the LGBTQ community.

No parent should have the right to opt my child out of an inclusive comprehensive education. We need your help to ensure all our students are included. Students in Carroll County need the same framework as the students in Baltimore County. It is unfortunate hate and bigotry disguised as values is preventing individual counties from including all students. When given a choice between mandating a framework that includes all, and not, the choice is clear. Everyone should be included. I beg for a favorable report on House 119. Public schools have a responsibility to the public. Public schools have a responsibility to include all students. Please vote favorably for HB199/SB199.