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February 1, 2023

Testimony in Support of HB0119/SB0199 — Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework - Established

The Board of Directors of Annapolis Pride enthusiastically supports HB0119 (SB0199) which will require each Local Education Agency to have an age-appropriate, comprehensive, medically accurate, and unbiased health and sexual Education curriculum that acknowledges and affirms students with a variety of sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. Simply put, it is essential that all of Maryland's young people receive comprehensive, medically accurate, and age-appropriate health and sexual education beginning in Kindergarten and continuing through high school. Without comprehensive education in the early years, students enter adolescence without the information they need to make responsible and safe decisions. The consequences of inadequate health and sexual education can lead to unhealthy relationships, unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, bullying, sexual assault, and discrimination. Comprehensive health and sexual education is vital for young people's overall educational achievement and future success.

Additionally, the comprehensive health and sexual education curriculum will develop young people's understanding of, including but not limited to autonomy, healthy relationships, and consent. The lack of a mandate requiring medically accurate, age-appropriate, comprehensive, and unbiased sexual health education puts Maryland students, and public health, at undue risk. LGBTQ+ students need and deserve the same access to accurate, up-to-date information about their sexual health as any other student. Research has shown that comprehensive health and sexual education leads to healthier teenage outcomes and encourages responsible sexual behaviors. Without a mandate, students across the state are unable to gain the necessary knowledge to comprehend complex material related to sexual health that is taught in later grades. By ensuring that students receive comprehensive health and sexual education, Maryland can protect its public health and its young people.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 0119

Respectfully Submitted:

Jaden T. Farris

Board Member

Annapolis Pride