

**HB0161 - Primary and Secondary Education – Comprehensive Health Education Framework – Established**

Committee: Ways and Means

Date: January 29, 2025

POSITION: Support

Dear Madame Chair and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

I am writing to ask for your favorable report on HB0161 - **Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework – Established.**

As both a parent and registered nurse caring for pediatric patients, I see the need for a better framework for health education in our state. Even as a person educated in some of these areas, I struggle with parenting to the needs of my children. Of course, one supposes any parent might, given the complexity and urgency of the task.

Each of my children is different with different needs that could be served better by the framework put forth in this bill.

My younger son, Danny, struggles with mental and emotional health issues. He has received great support in school and has come to better understand the needs of his mind better through targeted supports. His mental health issues were certainly done no good service by the impact of the pandemic on education. I sense that many of his peers who are in specialized social-emotional learning programs would benefit by better understanding their mental health.

My middle child, Mikey, is nonbinary. Nearly every study related to gender identity in adolescents will tell you that they do better when included than when excluded. Megan has benefited from a supportive school environment and a mother who does this a lot better than her father does. Every child deserves that, and this bill will help provide that.

My older son, Sam, was a good kid. He was kind, funny, and had an optimism that could not be broken. He also struggled with substance abuse. He fought that disease as best he could, but I know from my working life, that one can do everything right with a patient as still have an unhappy outcome. So it was with Sam. We lost him to a drug overdose last May. I can't say that more or better substance abuse prevention efforts would have saved him or if it will save the next kid, but my broken heart tells me that we must make every effort to try. Every effort includes the framework contained within this bill.

Again, I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on this bill.

Sincerely,

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