

My concerns on bill [HB0161](#) (“Primary and Secondary Education – Comprehensive Health Education Framework – Established”) are about local control, parental rights, and the potential for unintended consequences in both the educational system and the broader community. The bill is placing undue restrictions on local schools and families while also raising questions about the effectiveness of a standardized framework in addressing such sensitive and complex issues.

Here are some key points of my concerns:

## 1. Overreach of Government in Education

- **Local Control:** The bill is an overstep of the state government into areas traditionally managed by local school districts. Education, particularly concerning sensitive topics like health and human sexuality, is often best handled at the local level where schools can be more attuned to the community’s specific values, needs, and preferences.
- **One-Size-Fits-All:** A statewide mandate for a comprehensive health education framework could fail to account for the diversity of beliefs, cultures, and values across different Maryland counties and communities. This one-size-fits-all approach could be seen as disregarding local preferences or unique regional needs.

## 2. Infringement on Parental Rights

- **Parental Autonomy:** The bill includes provisions for parents to opt their children out of specific topics, but the creation of this framework could still be seen as reducing parental control over the full scope of what their children are being taught. Some parents might feel that the curriculum proposed by the state or local school boards is inconsistent with their values, religious beliefs, or ethical views, and might prefer even more control over the specifics of their children’s education.
- **Burden of Opting Out:** While the bill provides for an opt-out option, the process may be cumbersome or stigmatizing, potentially leading to children feeling isolated or different from their peers. The administrative burden of opting out could also be seen as a deterrent to parents who wish to avoid certain topics altogether but find the procedure overly complex or intrusive.

## 3. Parental Concerns Over Specific Content

- **Sensitive Topics:** Issues related to family life and human sexuality are highly sensitive for many families. Some parents may have concerns about how these topics are presented to their children—whether the material is too explicit, too early, or does not align with their cultural or religious views. The requirement for the state to develop a comprehensive framework might raise concerns that these topics will be presented in a way that some parents find inappropriate or too advanced for certain age groups.
- **Unintended Consequences of Mandates:** Even with the opt-out provision, parents might argue that their children’s exposure to these topics is inevitable if not properly handled. The bill’s mandate could inadvertently lead to more controversy, as parents may feel that the state is infringing on their role as the primary educators about these sensitive issues.

#### **4. Flexibility of Curriculum**

- **Curriculum Timing and Relevance:** The bill doesn't fully address the issue of how rapidly societal norms and understandings of health and sexuality evolve. What is considered appropriate and relevant today may change over time. Schools should have the flexibility to adapt their curriculum to stay current with scientific, cultural, and educational developments.

#### **5. Religious Concerns**

- **Religious Freedom:** Some parents, particularly those with strong religious beliefs, may object to the inclusion of certain topics related to human sexuality, reproductive health, or family life in the curriculum. They might argue that these topics are better addressed within the home or church and that requiring their children to engage with such content at school infringes upon their religious freedoms and parental rights.

#### **6. The Effectiveness of an Opt-Out Provision**

- **Limited Choice:** The opt-out provision may not fully address the concerns of parents who want more direct control over what their children are taught, particularly when it comes to topics like sexuality and family life. While the provision offers a form of parental involvement, it doesn't allow parents to dictate the content of the entire curriculum or make choices regarding their child's exposure to specific subject matter in the same way they might in private education settings.

Thanks for your consideration.

Best regards,  
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