

House Bill 161

Primary and Secondary Education-Comprehensive Health Education Framework-Established

January 29, 2025

Support

Elyse Pine

Baltimore, Baltimore City

Chase Brexton Health Care

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

I am a pediatrician who works at Chase Brexton Health Care. Chase Brexton Health Care provides medical and mental health services for transgender and nonbinary people.

I support HB 161. I have been taking care of adolescents for over 20 years. I have seen the results of sexual education that neglect the needs of sexual and gender minority youth in the exam room- young people who have very little information about safer sexual practices that are pertinent to their lives, leading to preventable sexually transmitted infections, and feeling unsupported, unrepresented and stigmatized (Roberts 2019).

Conversely, there is research showing that comprehensive health education that includes sexual orientation and gender identity content improved student health and school climate.

A longitudinal study found that LGBTQ inclusive curriculum in high school reduced name calling and increased willingness to intervene when witnessing name calling. (Baams

2017). Researchers found additional benefits lower homophobia, reduced homophobic bullying, decrease in intimate partner violence and domestic violence, enhanced communication skills, improved knowledge attitudes and skills, healthy relationships.

Other methodologically strong studies have found that LGBTQ-inclusive sex education is related to lower reports of adverse mental health (suicidal thoughts and suicide plans) among all youth, reduced experiences of bullying among sexual minority youth, and better health outcomes among gay, lesbian, and bisexual students, including fewer sex partners, less use of drugs or alcohol before sex, less pregnancy, and better school attendance (Rabbitte, 2020)

This bill ensures that students across Maryland will have access to inclusive information for physical, emotional and social health. I respectfully urge the committee to return a favorable report on HB161.

Baams L, Dubas JS, van Aken MA. Comprehensive Sexuality Education as a Longitudinal Predictor of LGBTQ Name-Calling and Perceived Willingness to Intervene in School. *J Youth Adolesc.* 2017 May;46(5):931-942

Rabbitte M. Sex Education in School, are Gender and Sexual Minority Youth Included?: A Decade in Review. *Am J Sex Educ.* 2020;15(4):530-542

Roberts, C., Shiman, L. J., Dowling, E. A., Tantay, L., Masdea, J., Pierre, J., ... Bedell, J. (2019). LGBTQ+ students of colour and their experiences and needs in sexual health education: 'You belong here just as everybody else.' *Sex Education*, 20(3), 267–282.

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