

## **HB 161 SUPPORT**

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

House of Delegates, Ways and Means Committee

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

My name is Kellen Sweeney. I live in Baltimore City with my spouse and four year old child, who will start Kindergarten in Baltimore City this fall.

I support this legislation. I think all of these topics are foundational for kids to understand as they grow and learn. It makes sense that the Department of Health would have a guiding role in ensuring that the content is accurate and reflects current expert opinion, and in regularly refreshing the curriculum accordingly.

I also appreciate that the curriculum must include some discussion of gender and family diversity. We are a gender diverse family, and our experience has been that kids will be exposed to these topics regardless of whether they are taught – it's just a matter of whether they are exposed through a rigorous curriculum that has been developed by experts and delivered with a teacher present, or if they learn from other children on the playground. My four year old is admittedly not the best positioned to explain gender diversity to their peers.

I don't think it is wise for parents to opt their children out of the family life and sexuality portion of the curriculum, and question whether it is wise for the legislature to set the precedent to allow parents to opt their kids out of topics they are uncomfortable with. But I recognize this is pretty common across the US, and the most important thing is that the education is offered, is accurate and age-appropriate, and the default expectation is that kids will participate unless a parent objects.