



## REPUBLICAN WOMEN OF FREDERICK COUNTY

March 26, 2024

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chairman  
Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee.

RE: HB558 – Primary & Secondary Education – Comprehensive Health Education Framework

Chairman Feldman and Members,

HB 558 enacts into law the Department of Education's *Maryland Comprehensive Health Education Framework: Pre-Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> Grade*.

HB 558 goes further by requiring that: "With the assistance of the county health department, each county shall provide (1) adequate school health services; (2) instruction in health education..."

This bill seeks to dramatically expand health care services in the school setting while dramatically reducing parental permission and involvement.

The Framework reduces the primary roles of parents and traditional families -- "family is a group of people that support each other." That is an incomplete description of "family" and ignores biological and legal relationships.

We object to implementation of the Framework for these reasons:

### Standard 1a: Mental and Emotional Health

1. There is just one mention of "parents" for grades Pre-K through Grade 5 but repeated use of "trusted adults" who can help with emotions or feelings. Parents must be identified as the most important trusted adults, and family beliefs and values respected.
2. Parents must be involved whether they agree with the action or not. School systems that exclude parents on the premise of protecting student privacy as it relates to mental or emotional health are violating parental rights and legal obligations. Parents will be left to deal with the consequences, financial and emotional.
3. These elements of the Framework are even more concerning in light of the State's recent change that allows 12-year-olds to seek mental or emotional health counseling and treatment without parental knowledge or consent. This diminishes parental rights and increases the likelihood that school or health personnel can guide a 12-year-old into counseling or treatment without parents' knowledge or consent.

Standard 1b: Substance Abuse Prevention waits until 4th grade to talk about cannabis or illegal drugs, but in Grade 2 introduces the subjects of alcohol, nicotine, and electronic smoking devices. With recreational cannabis now legal, the likelihood that children will encounter edible cannabis products dramatically increases.

#### Standard 1c: Family Life and Human Sexuality

1. Kindergarteners will “identify different types of families (e.g., single-parent, same gender, intergenerational, cohabitating, adoptive, foster, etc.)” with no mention of two-parent, heterosexual, or married families.
2. Grade 6 -- identify human reproductive systems, including medically accurate names for internal and external genitalia and their functions, and describe conception and its relationship to the menstrual cycle and vaginal sex.
3. Grade 7 -- identify solo, vaginal, anal, and oral sex along with possible outcomes for each; and identify ways to prevent pregnancy, including not having sex and effective use of contraceptives, including condoms.

These are highly sensitive subjects. The Framework makes no mention of protecting the innocence, modesty, or dignity of children in these discussions. How will classes be structured? Who will teach the more sensitive subjects? What are their qualifications?

This intersectionality of education and health services appears intended to facilitate the prescribing of medications without parental knowledge or consent: (1) Contraceptives or abortion pills or referred for abortions. (2) Puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones or gender-affirming surgery before age 18. It is widely recognized that the human brain is still developing until about age 25, which is why juveniles are not held to the same level of responsibility for serious crimes committed under age 18. For these same reasons, a child under age 18 should not be able to consent to actions that permanently remove their ability to reproduce and become a parent themselves.

Whether intentional or not, provisions of the Framework and this bill will have negative implications for the two-parent family as the basic unit of our society.

For all of these reasons please give HB 558 an UNFAVORABLE report.

Sincerely  
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