

## House Bill 558: Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework - Established

Dear Education, Energy & Environment Committee Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and all other esteemed Committee Members:

Please oppose HB558, which would require every school district to teach the Maryland Health Framework in its entirety.

I am very concerned about the loss of instructional time on core subjects. In the 2022-2023 school year, 53% percent of Maryland students from grades 3-8 were NOT proficient in language arts; 75% of students in grades 3-8 were NOT proficient in math; 74% of students in the eighth grade were NOT proficient in science (see full report [here](#)). These statistics show that more time on core subjects, not less, is required to prepare Maryland students for graduation and productive working careers or college readiness. Our students are struggling!!

I do NOT agree with the Primary and Secondary Comprehensive Health Education Framework including the topics of Mental and Emotional Health and Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation. The requirement that issues such as gender identity, sexuality and mental health be taught extensively in every public school infringes upon the parent's fundamental right to direct the upbringing of the child (see *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 268 U.S. 510 (1925)). Among other subjects, the Framework requires extensive teaching regarding sexuality, gender identity and mental health. Decisions in these personal arenas deeply affect a child's life. As such, these subjects should be discussed in the home by parents, rather than in the public school system. As HB558 now stands, there is no opt-out option for parents, which is a matter of deep concern for many parents throughout the state of Maryland!! And as that is the case, these topics should be "Opt-in", not "Opt-out"!!

Gender and sexuality are closely connected to religious and moral decisions that implicate the First Amendment. Students' and staff's First Amendment Rights have already been violated. It's only a matter of time before lawsuits make their way through the system.

The Framework requires that high school students differentiate between sexual orientation, sexual behavior, and sexual identity (see standard 1c.HS2.6). These distinctions are contrary to major religious creeds. Should a student who subscribes

to such a creed be required to complete assignments in which s/he must distinguish between sexual orientation, sexual behavior and sexual identity, in order to receive adequate marks, this could be considered compelled speech (see West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette, 319 U.S. 624 (1943)).

Gender identity and sexual orientation should not be taught in public schools at all. "Gender identity" is an ideology that is currently being debated around the world. Gender dysphoria is a mental illness that is listed in the most recent DSM that psychiatrists use to diagnose mental health illnesses. Would Gender Dysphoria be taught as well, as that is the actual mental health diagnosis listed in the DSM-5?

There are too many professionals throughout the world that disagree with gender identity and Gender Dysphoria to teach it in our public schools!

We are burdening our children with topics and themes beyond their intellectual and mental abilities and maturity. We are robbing them of their childhoods for politics.

Please vote to OPPOSE this bill in its entirety!! Thank you.

Trudy Tibbals

A Very Concerned Mother, Maryland Resident, and Maryland Voter