

Witness: Tara and Matthew Thompson  
Jurisdiction: Baltimore County  
Bill: HB0558 - Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework - Established  
Committee: Ways and Means - Senate  
Position: UNFAVORABLE  
March 27, 2024

Dear Committee,

We are writing as parents of 3 school aged children in opposition to HB0558 and requesting an UNFAVORABLE report.

Once this bill is passed, there will no longer be input and consideration from anyone outside of the State Department of Education and the MD Department of Health, in regards to what our children are taught in regards to comprehensive health education, which includes sensitive topics of sex ed, gender ideology. "THE DEPARTMENT SHALL UPDATE THE COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH EDUCATION FRAMEWORK IN THE MANNER AND AT THE TIME THE STATE BOARD DETERMINES IS NECESSARY". This takes nearly all local control away and any input from parents whose children go to these schools. Updates that are mentioned in the bill will occur after this bill is passed. Updates may change drastically and will affect all schools in Maryland. This will likely include private schools as well who follow the comprehensive health curriculum in MD.

There is no definition or measure in this bill as to what defines "age appropriate" for these sensitive topics. There is no consideration in regards to families and a child's special circumstances that could pose these topics presented to a child as harmful, inappropriate, or not age appropriate. A child's chronological age does not always meet their emotional age. This is a one size fits all approach to teaching health to our children. As we already know with children with learning differences and disabilities, specialized instruction and care is needed in planning a specific path for some children. One size fits all never works in education. We already know this. We know how harmful this approach can be.

As written, this bill does not allow parents to opt out of some of the most sensitive topics presented to children by educators in the school system. Not all families accept an ideology as truth. An ideology is a belief. Not all families believe sex discussions should be discussed at school. This comprehensive health curriculum is taught in every grade, every year from k-12 in Maryland. Not all 7th graders are ready to learn about anal sex and not all families want their children exposed to learning about it at school.

ALL CHILDREN NEED TO REMAIN PROTECTED. We humbly request your UNFAVORABLE vote on this bill for Maryland families and children. You know the devastating consequences introducing children to topics that they are not ready for can have. Parents should always have

the option to be able to choose if a sensitive topic is right for their child(ren). Please hold off on this bill until further discussion and planning can be considered and not rushed. Please vote UNFAVORABLE.

Sincerely,

Tara and Matthew Thompson

Parents of 3 school-aged children in Maryland and lifetime residents of Baltimore County