

HB0558 (Senate)_FAV_MedChi, MDAAP_Prim. & Sec. Ed.

Uploaded by: Christine Krone

Position: FAV



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TO: The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Members, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary

FROM: Christine K. Krone
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman
Andrew G. Vetter

DATE: March 27, 2024

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 558 – *Primary and Secondary Education – Comprehensive Health Education Framework – Established*

On behalf of The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi) and the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MDAAP), we submit this letter of **support** for House Bill 558.

MedChi and MDAAP are very supportive of the objectives of House Bill 558, which would require the Maryland State Department of Education, in consultation with the Maryland Department of Health, to develop a comprehensive health education framework. The bill specifies that the framework shall, at a minimum, include a number of topics, which are critical to enhancing the awareness and understanding of youth about significant issues that could ultimately impact their health and well-being. These topics include health promotion, mental and emotional health, substance abuse prevention, family life and human sexuality, gender identity and sexual orientation, safety and violence prevention, healthy eating, and disease prevention and control.

The above-named organizations recognize and support the provision of comprehensive and age-appropriate health education. Many of the subject areas identified in the legislation reflect issues that all youth should be informed about and should have an opportunity to engage in better understanding their implications. Without comprehensive education programs in the schools, many students will not have an avenue to gain the education and insight that would be provided through the required curriculum. We urge a favorable report.

For more information call:

Christine K. Krone
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410-244-7000

HB558 2024 GLSEN MD - Google Docs.pdf

Uploaded by: Jaden Farris

Position: FAV

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

DATE: March 27, 2024

POSITION: FAVORABLE

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and Environment

CONTACT: Jaden Farris | chapter@md.glsen.org

I am submitting this testimony in **FAVOR of HB0558** on behalf of GLSEN Maryland, the statewide chapter of GLSEN National, a nonprofit organization centered on creating and sustaining inclusive K-12 education for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) students.

Very few LGBTQ+ youth have access to inclusive health education, particularly sex education. Research by our parent organization, GLSEN National, found that only 8.2% of LGBTQ+ youth had access to inclusive health education at school. Research finds that LGBTQ+ youth perceive the health education they receive in school as inadequate (Pampati et al., 2020). Existing health education not only ignores the needs of LGBTQ+ youth, but in the case of education centered around dating, intimate relationships, and sexuality, it promotes heteronormative stereotypes that exclude and marginalize LGBTQ+ youth (Bible et al., 2020; Gowen et al., 2014; Hobaica, 2017).

Comprehensive health education which is inclusive of LGBTQ+ youth leads to better public health. Inadequate and non-inclusive curricula leads to LGBTQ+ youth having worse health outcomes. LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to participate in high-risk activities (Hobaica, 2017) which lead to greater likelihood of unplanned pregnancy (Bodnar & Tornello, 2019; Herrick et al., 2010) and are more likely to experience dating and intimate partner violence (Hobaica, 2017; Kann, 2016). LGBTQ+ youth who attend schools with inclusive curriculum have lower levels of depression and suicidality (Proulx et al., 2019). Comprehensive, inclusive health education helps prevent dating and intimate partner violence, fosters the formation of healthy intimate relationships, helps prevent child sex abuse, improves social and emotional learning, and improves media literacy (Goldfarb & Lieberman, 2021).

Comprehensive and inclusive health education aligns with best-practices in public health. Inclusive health education is recommended by the American Medical Association, the National Education Association, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is supported by the CDC and the American Bar Association. Failure to include the needs of LGBTQ+ students in health curricula means withholding the latest advancements and best-practices in public health from all students.

There is broad public support for inclusive sexual education in public schools. Regardless of religious identity, regional demographics, or political affiliations, there is huge public support for comprehensive and inclusive health education, including sex education (Eisenberg et al.; 2008). Most parents (89.3%) support comprehensive health education (sexual education that includes both abstinence and contraception, STI education, consent, healthy relationships, etc.).

According to the nonprofit organization SIECUS (2018), the majority of people (69%) support teaching about sexual orientation in middle and high schools. People who oppose teaching concepts pertaining to LGBTQ+ student health may be vocal, but they are in the minority.

Finally, **inclusive education benefits all youth, not just LGBTQ+ students, by improving school climate.** Inclusive health education serves the purpose of reducing stigma and marginalization of LGBTQ+ students, which contributes to improvements in school climate more broadly. It is not just LGBTQ+ youth who are the target of anti-LGBTQ+ bullying; students who are heterosexual or not transgender are also frequent targets of anti-LGBTQ+ bullying (for instance, heterosexual students who are not transgender can also be called anti-gay slurs, teased for being too effeminate or masculine, etc.; Fisher et al., 2012; McCarty-Caplan, 2013). Because offering comprehensive, inclusive health education reduces stigma and marginalization of LGBTQ+ youth, it leads to improved school climates for everyone. And, schools that have implemented inclusive health curricula find that students are subsequently more likely to intervene when witnessing bullying (Baams et al., 2017; Proulx et al., 2019).

Given the disproportionate health disparities experienced by LGBTQ+ youth, coupled with the research which demonstrates that inclusive health education reduces these disparities and improves school climate for all students, GLSEN Maryland supports comprehensive health education which is inclusive of LGBTQ+ youth. Therefore, **GLSEN Maryland supports HB0558 and recommends a FAVORABLE report in committee.**

HB558 Annapolis Pride 2024 - Google Docs.pdf

Uploaded by: Jaden Farris

Position: FAV



Board of Directors

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(he/him)

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Chris Haley

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David Jones

(he/him)

Heather Maher

(she/her)

Nicole McCoy

(she/her)

Jessica Parsell

(she/her)

Sarah Sample

(she/her)

Joshua Seefried

(he/him)

Jayne Walters

(she/her)

Tim Williams

(he/him)

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

DATE: March 27, 2024

POSITION: FAVORABLE

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and Environment

CONTACT: Jaden Farris | jaden@annapolispride.org

Annapolis Pride's mission is to advocate for, empower, and celebrate the LGBTQ+ community in Anne Arundel County to live fully and authentically. Our vision is a safe, equitable, and anti-racist community where people of all identities thrive.

As such, Annapolis Pride enthusiastically supports House Bill 558 which will require each Local Education Agency to have an age-appropriate, comprehensive, medically accurate, and unbiased health and sexual education curriculum that acknowledges and affirms students with a variety of sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. All of Maryland's young people must have access to comprehensive, medically accurate, and age-appropriate health and sexual education beginning in kindergarten and continuing through high school.

Research indicates very few LGBTQ+ youth currently have access to inclusive health education, leaving them inadequately prepared to make informed and safe decisions regarding their health and well-being.¹ Without comprehensive education, specifically in the early years, students enter adolescence without the information they need to make responsible and safe decisions. The consequences of inadequate health and sexual education can lead to unhealthy relationships, unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, bullying, sexual assault, and discrimination.² Comprehensive health and sexual education is vital for young people's overall educational achievement and future success.

Furthermore, the lack of a mandate requiring medically accurate, age-appropriate, comprehensive, and unbiased sexual health education puts Maryland students, and the public health, at undue risk. LGBTQ+ students deserve the same access to accurate, up-to-date information about their sexual health as any other student. Research shows that comprehensive health and sexual education leads to healthier teenage outcomes and encourages responsible sexual behaviors.³

¹ Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., & Menard, L. (2022). The 2021 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of LGBTQ+ youth in our nation's schools. New York: GLSEN.

² Breuner CC, Mattson G, AAP Committee on Adolescence, AAP Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health. Sexuality Education for Children and Adolescents. Pediatrics. 2016;138(2):e20161348

³ Haberland N, Rogow D, Sexuality Education: Emerging Trends in Evidence and Practice, Journal of Adolescent Health, Volume 56, Issue 1, Supplement, 2015, Pages S15-S21, ISSN 1054-139X, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2014.08.013>

Despite the belief that children are too young to understand gender identity and human sexuality, this assertion is false. From the moment they are born, children receive messages and stereotypes about how they are supposed to look and behave from peers, books, and media. Studies show how the messages kids receive about gender influence them at very early ages and place them into strict boxes, preventing them from reaching their full potential. Around age four, most children have a stable sense of their gender identity.⁴ This is a core aspect of one's identity that comes from within each of us and is an inherent aspect of one's makeup.

Accordingly, Annapolis Pride respectfully requests a favorable committee report on House Bill 558.

⁴ Graham P. Transgender children and young people: how the evidence can point the way forward. *BJPsych Bull.* 2023 Apr;47(2):98-104. doi: 10.1192/bjb.2022.3. PMID: 35177147; PMCID: PMC10063975.

Favorable Testimony HB558 in Senate EEE 3.27.2024

Uploaded by: Jeremy Browning

Position: FAV



**Maryland Commission
on LGBTQIA+ Affairs**

**TESTIMONY OF JEREMY BROWNING
DIRECTOR, MARYLAND COMMISSION ON LGBTQIA+ AFFAIRS
FAVORABLE STATEMENT ON HB0558
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION - COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH
EDUCATION FRAMEWORK**

March 27, 2024

Environment, Energy, and the Environment Committee

The Hon. Brian J. Feldman, Chair
The Hon. Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Environment, Energy, and the Environment Committee, my name is Jeremy Browning(he/him), and I am the Director of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs. The Commission was created by the 2021 Maryland General Assembly, and later altered in 2023, to assess challenges facing our LGBTQIA+ communities, establish best practices and recommendations for LGBTQIA+ inclusion, and provide testimony to legislative and administrative bodies.

On behalf of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs we strongly support House Bill 558 to create a comprehensive health education framework. This bill is a critical step towards ensuring that all students receive inclusive, age-appropriate and evidence-based education on various health topics, including gender identity and sexual orientation.

The Commission has extensively researched and analyzed the experiences of LGBTQIA+ youth in our state's education system. Reports such as the 2021 GLSEN National School Climate Survey and the GLSEN 2021 Maryland State Snapshot reveal distressing data regarding the safety and well-being of LGBTQIA+ students in Maryland's schools.

These reports consistently demonstrate that Maryland's K-12 schools are frequently unsafe and hostile environments for LGBTQIA+ students. They experience alarming rates of bullying, harassment, assault, and discrimination from multiple sources,

including peers, educators, administrators, and even family members. The consequences of this hostility are severe, leading to lower academic achievement, diminished mental health, and increased risk of suicidal ideation and behavior among LGBTQIA+ youth.

According to the Maryland Department of Health 2021-2022 Youth Risk Behavior Survey and Youth Tobacco Survey findings, students identifying as LGBTQ+ were more likely to report more risk behaviors measured on the survey compared to their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts.

Providing comprehensive health education that includes topics such as gender identity and sexual orientation is essential for promoting the well-being and safety of all students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. By requiring each county board of education to create an age-appropriate curriculum consistent with the comprehensive health education framework outlined in HB558, we can ensure that students receive accurate and affirming information that reflects the diversity of our public schools and communities.

For these reasons, the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs strongly urges a favorable report on House Bill 558.

REFERENCES:

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https://maps.glsen.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/GLSEN_2021_NSCS_State_Snapshots_MD.pdf

GLSEN. The 2021 National School Climate Survey Executive Summary:

https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/NSCS-2021-Executive_Summary-EN.pdf

Maryland Department of Health: 2021-2022 Youth Risk Behavior Survey and Youth Tobacco Survey: <https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/ccdpc/Reports/Pages/YRBS-Main.aspx>

Health Ed - K-12 - testimony - House in Senate - 2

Uploaded by: Lisae C Jordan

Position: FAV



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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For more information contact:
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Testimony Supporting House Bill 558
Lisae C. Jordan, Executive Director & Counsel
March 27, 2024

The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA) is a non-profit membership organization that includes the State's seventeen rape crisis centers, law enforcement, mental health and health care providers, attorneys, educators, survivors of sexual violence and other concerned individuals. MCASA includes the Sexual Assault Legal Institute (SALI), a statewide legal services provider for survivors of sexual assault. MCASA represents the unified voice and combined energy of all of its members working to eliminate sexual violence in the State of Maryland. We urge the Education, Energy & the Environment Committee to report favorably on House Bill 558.

House Bill 558 – K-12 Comprehensive Health Education

This bill will mandate a comprehensive health education for students in K-12. MCASA notes and appreciates that this specifically includes issues vital to preventing sexual assault and promoting health relationships, including:

- (IV) FAMILY LIFE AND HUMAN SEXUALITY**
- (V) GENDER IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION**
- (VI) SAFETY AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION**

This bill is particularly strong because it approaches health education holistically and will permit educators to develop curricula that respond to the needs of students. By including the broad spectrum of topics, the Comprehensive Education Framework will help create a cohesive and sensible approach to related topics such as sexuality, consent, and abuse prevention. As the Committee considers this important legislation, MCASA urges it to remember that some children are in abusive, violent, and unsupportive homes. Most parents are wonderful, but some are not. A full curricula, including topics addressing sensitive issues such as healthy relationships and sexuality, can be a life line for students who are in desperate need of help.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault
urges the Education, Energy & the Environment Committee to
report favorably on House Bill 558**

2024 Comprehensive HEALTH EDUCATION.pdf

Uploaded by: Nicole Hollywood

Position: FAV



LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

Bill: HB558 **Comprehensive Health Education**

Organization: PFLAG Salisbury Inc., PO Box 5107, Salisbury Maryland 21802

Submitted by: Nicole Hollywood, Board Member

Position: **FAVORABLE**

SALISBURY PFLAG SUPPORTS COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH EDUCATION

Greetings distinguished committee members. This testimony in FAVOR of **HB558** is being submitted on behalf of PFLAG Salisbury, the Salisbury, Maryland Chapter of PFLAG National, the nation's first and largest national organization dedicated to supporting, educating, and advocating for LGBTQIA+ people and their families.

It is vital that our State's health education be updated to be comprehensive, inclusive, age-appropriate, and relevant. School-based health education helps young people acquire an accurate and purposeful understanding of their own health that will strengthen positive attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors necessary for them to adopt and maintain healthy activities throughout their lives. Studies have found that students who receive comprehensive health education make safer, more informed, less destructive choices, and are better at exerting agency over themselves. Further, the research shows that improving the health acumen of young people not only has a positive influence over their personal choices but can also impact the behaviors of their peers, family members, and others in the community.

An exhaustive systematic review of the literature published in The Journal of Adolescent Health in 2020 found that outcomes of comprehensive health education include appreciation of sexual diversity, dating and intimate partner violence prevention, development of healthy relationships, prevention of child sex abuse, improved social/emotional learning, decreases in homophobia and transphobia, and increased media literacy. Further, substantial evidence strongly supported sex education beginning in elementary school, that is scaffolded and of longer duration, as well as LGBTQIA+-inclusive education across the school curriculum and a social justice approach to healthy sexuality.

Building the health knowledge of young people ensures that teens learn to think about what is right and safe for them, and how to avoid coercion, sexually transmitted infections, and early and unintended pregnancies. Most importantly, it helps to keep young people safe from abuse by teaching them about their bodies.

There are also economic benefits to comprehensive health education as exhaustive health education can increase health literacy, the lack of which is estimated by the US Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion to cost the nation \$1.6 to \$3.6 trillion dollars annually.

The National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy by the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) includes the goal to "incorporate accurate, standards-based, and developmentally appropriate health and science information and curricula in childcare and education through the university level". Additionally,

the National Committee on the Future of School Health Education, the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) and the American School Health Association (ASHA), developed recommendations for strengthening school health education. The recommendations include- developing and adopting standardized measures of health literacy in children and including them in state accountability systems; changing policies, practices, and systems for quality school health education; and stronger alignment and coordination between the public health and education sectors.

Maryland schools are required to teach health and sexual education. This health education, however, is not required to align with the National Sex Education Standards and abstinence is stressed over the reality that young people are interested in sex and sexual health. The Maryland Health Education Framework includes instruction on sexual orientation, gender identity, and cultural responsiveness in order to meet the needs of ALL young people; however, due to local school boards controlling curriculum there are significant disparities resulting in the exclusion of LGBTQIA+ learners and thousands of young people each year not receiving a representative and medically accurate health and sexual education. What are the results of these disparities beyond marginalization, ostracization, and perpetuation of negative attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ youth? The result is rising STI rates, something that those of us in Maryland's higher education system can affirm has reached crisis levels. In fact, over half of all new STI cases occur in teens and young adults (15-24 years old). Further, Maryland's syphilis rate grew by 102% between 2016 and 2020 and Maryland currently ranks 19 out of 50 for chlamydia, higher than the national average.

The research is consistent and conclusive that states with high STD/STI and teen pregnancy rates have a lack of appropriate health and sexual education for adolescents. According to Dr. Price, Director of Research at the Trevor Project, "when sex education does not address issues important to LGBTQ+ youth they think this doesn't apply to me. I don't need to listen." Making them miss out on crucial, potentially lifesaving information. LGBTQIA+ inclusive health and sexual education helps students understand that gender and sexuality are a spectrum while breaking down harmful stereotypes about LGBTQIA+ identities and while conveying valuable information designed to keep them safe regardless of their anatomy or chosen sexual partners.

The research and recommendations are clear. As such, Salisbury PFLAG supports comprehensive health education and recommends a FAVORABLE report in committee.

References

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HB0558 health framework 3 27 2024.pdf

Uploaded by: Wendy Novak

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL HB0558 - FAVORABLE

Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework – Established

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

FROM: Wendy Novak, Carroll County, Maryland

I'm a member of the Maryland Commission for LGBTQIA+ Affairs, a resident of Carroll County, and a parent of a middle school student that witnesses hate in schools. They have heard students saying that only white people are LGBTQ. If you are or support LGBTQ people, you are going to hell, and have witnessed class discussions on the gender identity of a specific student present in the classroom. Our LGBTQ students are more likely to miss school out of fear for their safety, and more likely to be physically harmed on school campuses.

The Department of Education was concerned about these facts and created the Maryland Comprehensive Health Education Framework. This bill codifies the overall concepts listed in the framework by establishing a "floor" for what is taught as part of the Maryland health education curriculum. It leaves the particulars of the framework up to the Counties and State Dept. of Education while guaranteeing an inclusive curriculum for all students. This allows for each district to tailor the materials for its students and consider a wide range of stakeholders when developing the content. It contains and affirms the long-standing opt-out for Family Life and Human Sexuality, allowing parents to exercise their discretion over what is taught to their children-- and it also guarantees that the rest of the curriculum is inclusive of and representative for all students.

Our public schools have a responsibility to include all students, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. The parents claiming that children should be protected from knowing our LGBTQ community members exist and calling affirming parents hateful names are teaching hate to their children. They will not be teaching their children accurate information about the LGBTQIA+ community. Regardless of what a parent believes or not, their student will encounter LGBTQIA+ students, staff, or faculty. This bill ensures students will receive an accurate education about LGBTQIA+ topics. Students receiving an inclusive health education will be better empowered to make healthy decisions. Inclusive health education benefits all, not just our LGBTQIA+ students, by improving the school climate, and reducing the stigma and marginalization of our LGBTQIA+ students.

Students are the stakeholders; they have the right to an inclusive education.

I request a favorable report on HB558.

HB558 Testimony 2024.pdf

Uploaded by: Debi Jasen

Position: FWA

House Bill 558 - FAVORABLE with Amendment
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee;

I ask that you give House Bill 558, regarding public school health education, a Favorable report with an amendment. The amendment that I'd like to see is to make the topic "Family Life and Human Sexuality" mandatory as opposed to elective.

There should no more be a way to opt out of the important, factual lessons that can be found in sexuality education courses than to opt out of lessons about evolution, climate change, that the earth is spherical, that humans have visited the moon, that vaccines are effective, or that racism exists. One's personal beliefs shouldn't determine what they're taught in a public school system. Those parents and guardians who don't want for their children to participate in all of the aspects of public education should send their children to private schools or homeschool them. If they don't believe that those are options, then they can have discussions with their children at home about what they've learned that day, and share any conflicting beliefs at that time. But the schools shouldn't be facilitating ignorance and prejudice. That's not what education is supposed to be about.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Debi Jasen
Pasadena, MD

HB558 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Cindy Rose

Position: UNF



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 12th 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
Cindy A. Rose
Legislative Chair
Republican Women of Frederick County
4909 Ijamsville Road
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csticklinerose@comcast.net

HB558-DPTC.pdf

Uploaded by: Darren Lombardo

Position: UNF



P.O. Box 5200
Salisbury, MD 21801

March 25, 2024

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 Senate Office
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: House Bill 558

Dear Committee Members:

Just a few years ago, the Delmarva Parent Teacher Coalition (DPTC) was established by parents and teachers due to the many violations and abuses of eroding parental rights in the State of Maryland. Representing thousands of parents and teachers across the state, we have collectively discovered the systematic integrations and obstructive tactics that are designed to prevent parents from parenting, being involved in their child's education, making choices for their child's health, and what's best for their child's upbringing.

We have seen firsthand the state's infringing on parental rights. HB558 infringes on parent rights by forcing the teaching of certain topics, including gender identity and sexual orientation in the Comprehensive Health Education Framework without an opt-out provision. In addition, it also infringes on local control, which elected school boards must retain the right and responsibility to choose the curriculum content that best meets the needs of the students in their county. We oppose any actions such as this that attempt to violate the rights of parents and to legislate curriculum.

The DPTC opposes HB558 and urges an unfavorable committee report.

Thank you,

Darren Lombardo, Director
Delmarva Parent Teacher Coalition

HB0558 Opposition.pdf

Uploaded by: David Morsberger

Position: UNF

David Morsberger
Davidsonville, Maryland
Anne Arundel County

OPPOSE – Do not vote in favor of HB0558 in committee.

HB0558 - Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework - Established

This bill is very vague when it comes a parents right to manage their child’s education and manage how their child deals with social and mental issues.

The bill lists nine topics that must be included:

- (I) HEALTH PROMOTION;
- (II) MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH;
- (III) SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION;
- (IV) FAMILY LIFE AND HUMAN SEXUALITY;
- (V) GENDER IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION;
- (VI) SAFETY AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION;
- (VII) SAFE AND APPROPRIATE SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERNET;
- (VIII) HEALTHY EATING; AND
- (IX) DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL.

The bill specifically states that a parent **can opt their child out** of the “*FAMILY LIFE AND HUMAN SEXUALITY*”

The bill specifically states that a parent **cannot opt their child out** of education relating to “*HIV AND AIDS PREVENTION*”

So,

- **What topics (I) through (IX) include “*HIV AND AIDS PREVENTION*” so that a parent and local board of election know what topics a child can be opted out of?**
- **In general, what is the “opt out” policy for topics (I) through (III) and topics (V) through (IX), the non-“*FAMILY LIFE AND HUMAN SEXUALITY*” topics?**

A bill that regulates local boards of educations **MUST** be very clear and **NOT** leave items up for interpretation.

I respectfully request that you **DO NOT VOTE IN FAVOR** of HB0558 in committee.

I oppose HB0558.pdf

Uploaded by: James Elbourn

Position: UNF

Dear Senator,

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

I am concerned about the loss of instructional time on core subjects, should school districts be required to teach the Framework. In the 2022-2023 school year, forty-seven (47%) percent of Maryland students from grades 3-8 were proficient in language arts. Twenty-five percent (25%) of students in grades 3-8 were proficient in math. Twenty-six percent (26%) of students in the eighth grade were 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 careers.

HB558 would take control away from local Boards of Education. This is an unwise choice because local Boards are best equipped to meet the challenges of their individual localities.

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.

Gender and sexuality are closely connected to religious and moral decisions that implicate the First Amendment. For example, 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 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)).

I ask that you consider opposing this bill in its entirety. Thank you for the service you render to Maryland.

Sincerely,

James Elbourn

HB 558.Health Curriculum State Framework SENATE.pd

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: UNF

BILL: House Bill 558
TITLE: Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework - Established
DATE: March 27, 2024
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes House Bill 558. This legislation is not necessary to require the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), to develop a comprehensive health education framework. This is because these agencies and a broad group of stakeholders have already done so. MABE's opposition to this health framework and curriculum bill is firmly grounded in the association's adopted legislative positions, which affirm that MABE:

- Supports local decision-making authority in developing curriculum, assessments, grading policies, and instructional programs and the adoption of statewide laws and regulations reflecting a commitment to local governance, professional judgment of local educators, and community engagement; and
- Opposes any efforts by the General Assembly to legislate curriculum or testing matters inconsistent with MABE's adopted resolutions and legislative positions.

MSDE approved a revised health education framework in 2021, based on regulations updated in 2019. The "Maryland Comprehensive Health Education Framework: Pre-Kindergarten through 12th Grade" was drafted and reviewed by representatives from local school systems, MSDE, the Maryland Department of Health, University of Maryland School of Medicine, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, American Academy of Pediatrics, Advocates for Youth, and a parent and high school student. Since 2021, local boards have been engaging their parents and local communities to devise their local curriculum, including the approved option for parents to have their children opt out of the Health and Human Sexuality instruction. MABE strongly supports this process of state standard development followed by flexible local curriculum development through community engagement.

MABE opposes this legislation for the reasons outlined above and to avoid setting the precedent that other content standards, curriculum, and instructional materials may become the subject of legislation. In Maryland, the authority to adopt curriculum, courses of study, and the selection of textbooks resides with each local board of education and superintendent. Examples of state laws establishing curriculum are limited, including specific subject matters such as agriculture, computer science, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation. The State Board of Education has approved regulations that contain more specific requirements to provide instructional programs in specific content areas and to include the content standards set forth in the curricular frameworks. The MSDE Protocol for Developing and Revising Standards defines the state frameworks as guides for school systems as they develop local school curricula. Again, MABE endorses this process and opposes a shift to legislating on curriculum matters more appropriately governed by State Board policy, guidance, and formally adopted regulations.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 558.

HB0558_Central Control of Education_Written.pdf

Uploaded by: Katherine Sullivan

Position: UNF

Witness: Katherine Strauch Sullivan
Jurisdiction: Baltimore County
Bill: HB0558 Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework -Established
Sponsor: Delegate [Atterbeary](#)
Position: AGAINST

Dear Committee,

I can't sugar coat this: According to the Maryland State Department of Education's own "Report Card" data, the 2022-2023 school year assessment results were abysmal. Here is a small sampling:

The 2022-2023 School assessments:

- Elementary School:
 - Only 46.7% of all elementary students were proficient in ELA
 - Only 34.1% of all elementary students were proficient in Math.
 - **Out of 3 potential measures for academic performance (Academic Achievement, Academic Progress, and School quality and Student Success), *not one target was met***
- Middle School:
 - Only 47.9% of all middle school students were proficient in ELA
 - Only 19.8% of all middle school students were proficient in Math.
 - **Out of 3 potential measures for academic performance (Academic Achievement, Academic Progress, and School quality and Student Success), *not one target was met***
- High School:
 - Only 56.1% of all high school students were proficient in ELA
 - Only 34.9% of all high school students were proficient in Math.
 - **Out of 3 potential measures for academic performance (Academic Achievement, Academic Progress, and School quality and Student Success), *not one target was met***

We must prioritize reading, writing, and math. We must not be distracted by side programs that will divert our eyes off our children's proficiency in ELA and Math. It is not the job or duty of public education to offer a comprehensive health plan for our children.

All programs which are not created for the purpose of teaching students reading, writing, and math should be optional programs parents can opt *into* if they are interested.

And finally, it is distinctly un-American to diminish local control through centralized government power. We are not living under authoritarian rule. Local jurisdictions should always have the latitude to create educational goals consistent with the local values of the citizens in their community.

Sincerely,
Katherine Sullivan, Mother of 4 Public School Children
Baltimore County

Oppose HB558.pdf

Uploaded by: Kim Pratta

Position: UNF

Dear Members of the General Assembly,

Along with MABE, MSDE and many local BOE's, I am writing in strong opposition to HB558. This bill would in essence dismantle all local control over the curriculum and instruction and the amendments as written would result in a total state takeover of local control over curriculum frameworks, standards and instructional materials.

Currently, the authority to establish curriculum based on research, investigation and evaluation of curriculum and assessments resides with the local BOE's based on the best interest of their jurisdiction. The constituents of the local BOE members support this local decision-making authority in collaboration with the State Board of Education.

HB558 is a radical and dangerous change to the MD education policy which has always been balanced between state and local control regarding state standards and local curriculum. This bill would mandate that all local school systems follow every element of the policy and guidelines for the program of instruction established by the State BOE or suffer the consequences of reduced funding which could ultimately bankrupt individual school systems by withholding millions of dollars in state funding.

Accordingly, I urge you to act in opposition to HB558.

Respectfully,

Kim Pratta

UNFAVORABLE.HB558.Senate.LauraBogley.MDRTL.pdf

Uploaded by: Laura Bogley

Position: UNF



Opposition Statement HB 558 (Senate)
Comprehensive Health Education Framework
Laura Bogley, JD
Executive Director, Maryland Right to Life

We Strongly Oppose HB 558

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Maryland Right to Life and our 200,000 followers across the state, we strongly object to HB 558. This bill usurps the local authority of county school boards, undermines parental rights to make medical decisions for their children and further subjects minor school children to radical sexuality indoctrination and abortion coercion at the hands of those who stand to gain financially from unplanned pregnancies. We once again ask the state to put the safety of patients, in this case school children, before politics and profit, by issuing an unfavorable report on this reckless bill.

The State of Maryland, through the Department of Education has been entrusted by parents with the academic instruction of Maryland children. The state has far exceeded its limited authority to act in place of the parents during the school day, particularly in the matter of student health. The state has broadly expanded student health services beyond treating scraped knees and headaches, to now establishing full service community health centers on school property managed by third parties who stand to gain financially from substandard care.

We Trust Parents

Maryland Right to Life trusts parents to make the best decisions about their children's education and health. State law must recognize the natural and legal right of parents in the upbringing of their children and to provide consent for their children's medical care. But the state has repeatedly demonstrated a wanton disregard for the rights of parents and the welfare of school children. Under the influence of the abortion industry, the state removed the requirement that parents must first give permission for their child to participate in the sex ed curriculum, or to "opt in". Parents now have the obligation to "opt out" if they are provided notice at all.

Maryland is Failing to Protect Children

The Assembly recently removed protections under the law for children by reducing the age of medical consent for behavioral health services to 12 years of age. Mental health, including anxiety or depression has long been used to justify taxpayer funded abortion including on minor girls. Many of the same businesses who commit abortions, are expanding their business models and their reach over defenseless children by pushing puberty blockers and gender mutilation. Some have expressed their intention to use school psychologists and counselors as a feeder system to prey upon school children for their own financial gain.

While Maryland law already permits girls 16 and over to undergo abortion procedures without parental notice or consent, we do not know how many abortions are committed on children under the age of 16. The state shields abortionists by allowing them to commit abortions unfettered and without reporting requirements to the state or the Centers for Disease Control. Maryland is one of only three states that do not require abortion reporting. While abortion providers are supposed to be subject to the law as mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse, we are aware of no such report. Inspections of abortion clinics and practices are complaint-driven

only. But even after two women suffered near fatal injuries from botched abortions in Bethesda, the Maryland Department of Health refused to inspect the facility until after legal action was taken by the victims.

Maryland is State Sponsor of Abortion Industry

Maryland law does not require sex education to be either medically accurate nor age appropriate and it is neither. Both the Department of Education and the Department of Health have become state sponsors of the abortion industry, using taxpayer funds to contract out educational curriculum development, programs and training to questionable third-party organizations that are financially interested in abortion sales, including Planned Parenthood and Advocates for Youth.

Together they have established the existing **Maryland Comprehensive Health Education Framework** and the **Maryland Standards for School-Based Health Centers**. They are pushing a radical sexuality agenda beginning in kindergarten, that includes morally bankrupt and medically inaccurate curriculum that is not healthful or appropriate at any age. Already in Maryland a minor girl may undergo a medical procedure to implant birth control, get free transportation to an abortion mill, or possibly receive chemical abortion pills, all during the school day with an excused absence and without parental notice or consent (see attachment). The lack of parental notification under existing standards, puts students at greater risk of abortion coercion, undiagnosed abortion complications including death, and enables pedophiles and sexual abusers to continue abusing child victims.

Recently, the Maryland General Assembly removed oversight of School Based Health Centers from the Department of Education and gave the Department of Health unilateral control over health education. They broadly expanded what type of providers may manage and operate School Based Health Centers. We are opposed to any policy that allows Planned Parenthood to manage clinics on school grounds as they currently do in Los Angeles, California (see article *Washington Examiner*).

This bill seeks to expand all of the above and impose these dangerous policies on all local school boards and county schools.

Pregnancy is not a Disease

Abortion is not healthcare. It is violence and brutality that ends the lives of unborn children through suction, dismemberment or chemical poisoning. The fact that 85% of OB-GYNs in a representative national survey do not perform abortions on their patients is glaring evidence that abortion is not an essential part of women's healthcare. Women have better options for comprehensive health care. There are 14 federally qualifying health care centers for every Planned Parenthood in Maryland. Abortion has a disproportionate impact on Black Americans who have long been targeted by the abortion industry for eugenics purposes. As a result abortion is the leading cause of death of Black Americans, more than gun violence and all other causes combined.

No public funding for abortions

Taxpayers should not be forced to fund elective abortions, which make up the vast majority of abortions committed in Maryland. State funding for abortion on demand with taxpayer funds is in direct conflict with the will of the people. A 2023 Marist poll showed that 60% of Americans, both "pro-life" and "pro-choice" oppose the use of tax dollars to pay for a woman's abortion.

Love them both

This bill stands in conflict with the fact that 81% of Americans polled favor laws that protect both the lives of women and unborn children. Public funds instead should be prioritized to fund health and family planning services which have the objective of saving the lives of both mother and children, including programs for improving maternal health and birth and delivery outcomes, well baby care, parenting classes, foster care reform and affordable adoption programs.

Funding restrictions are constitutional

The Supreme Court of the United States, in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* (2022), overturned *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and held that there is no right to abortion found in the Constitution of the United States. As early as 1980 the Supreme Court affirmed in *Harris v. McRae*, that *Roe* had created a limitation on government, not a government funding entitlement. The Court ruled that the government may distinguish between abortion and other procedures in funding decisions -- noting that "*no other procedure involves the purposeful termination of a potential life*", and held that there is "*no limitation on the authority of a State to make a value judgment favoring childbirth over abortion, and to implement that judgment by the allocation of public funds.*"

Once again, we urge you to put parents and children before politics and profit, by issuing an unfavorable report on this destructive bill.

Sincerely,

Laura Bogley, J.D.
Executive Director
Maryland Right to Life

Developmentally appropriate reproductive care must be provided according to community acceptance, documented need and community norms. Reproductive health services are not in lieu of reproductive health services provided by community base health providers, SBHC are encouraged to partner with other community-based providers.

| Reproductive Health Services | Level I Core | Level II Expanded | Level III Comprehensive |
|--|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| d. General Reproductive Health Services | | | |
| Reproductive health exam (inclusive of pap, pelvic, testicular exam) | Recommended | Recommended | Recommended |
| Abstinence education | Onsite | Onsite | Onsite |
| Referral for community based reproductive healthcare services | Onsite | Onsite | Onsite |
| Case management | Onsite | Onsite | Onsite |
| Pregnancy testing | Onsite | Onsite | Onsite |
| Reproductive Health Education | Onsite | Onsite | Onsite |
| e. Family Planning Services | | | |
| Family Planning Services | Recommended | Recommended | Recommended |
| Prescriptions for contraceptives | Recommended | Recommended | Recommended |
| Comprehensive pregnancy options/ pregnancy counseling | Recommended | Recommended | Recommended |
| Case management | Onsite | Onsite | Onsite |
| Referral for community based reproductive healthcare services | Onsite | Onsite | Onsite |
| Condom availability | Recommended | Recommended | Recommended |
| Prenatal care | Referral | Referral | Referral |
| Informing and referring for birth control | Onsite | Onsite | Onsite |
| Dispensing contraceptives | Onsite or Referral | Onsite or Referral | Onsite or Referral |
| f. STD/STI Services | | | |
| Case management | Onsite | Onsite | Onsite |
| STD/STI treatment and testing | Onsite | Onsite | Onsite |
| Condom availability | Recommended | Recommended | Recommended |
| HIV pre- and post-test counseling/HIV testing | Recommended | Recommended | Recommended |
| HIV/AIDS treatment | Referral | Referral | Referral |

Mental Health Services must be provided in collaboration with a licensed provider for those students requiring psychotropic drugs as part of their treatment.

| g. Mental Health Services | Level I Core | Level II Expanded | Level III Comprehensive |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Individual mental health assessment | Referral | Onsite | Onsite |
| Mental health treatment | Referral | Onsite | Onsite |
| Mental health crisis intervention | Referral | Onsite | Onsite |
| Group therapy | Referral | Onsite | Onsite |
| Family therapy | Referral | Onsite | Onsite |
| Consultation with school administrators, parent/guardian, teachers and students | Onsite | Onsite | Onsite |
| Psychiatric evaluation | Onsite or Referral | Onsite or Referral | Onsite or Referral |
| Psychiatric medication management | Onsite or Referral | Onsite or Referral | Onsite or Referral |

Planned Parenthood plans to infiltrate high schools

by [Kate Hardiman, Contributor](#) | December 16, 2019 02:07 PM

Planned Parenthood [announced](#) it will be opening 50 clinics in Los Angeles high schools last week. This is just the organization's latest attempt to infuse its values into the public school system.

Though the new "Wellbeing Centers" stop short of offering surgical abortions, they will provide emergency contraception, STI testing and treatment, and a wide range of birth control options. Funded by a \$10 million grant from Los Angeles County and \$6 million from Planned Parenthood, 50 clinics will open over the next three years, available to more than 75,000 students.

Students can walk into the clinics anytime — including during class. Per California law, minors can receive emergency contraception and other forms of birth control, and healthcare providers are not allowed to inform their parents without the minor's permission.

The clinics will also train hundreds of teens to be "peer advocates" about "safe sex and relationships" and will provide "pregnancy counseling." Pro-life advocates believe these are thinly-veiled efforts to drive more business to Planned Parenthood's abortion-providing clinics.

"If LAUSD truly cares about the health of our daughters (and sons) it would not give unfettered access to our kids to an organization that directly benefits from unplanned pregnancies," 28-year California public school teacher and founder of the nonprofit organization For Kids and Country Rebecca Friedrichs said in a statement.

"District officials are quick to point out these clinics won't technically offer abortions on-premises, but no one is fooled that abortion won't be heavily pushed on our daughters and sons by an organization that has made billions off the macabre practice," she concluded.

This move builds upon [the controversial sex education framework](#) California forced into its public schools in April. Planned Parenthood helped draft and lobby for this effort — which pushes schools to teach young children about gender identity and how to perform certain types of sexual acts.

Roughly 200 parents marched on Sacramento against the curriculum before it was enacted, and a petition in Fremont, California, garnered more than 8,000 signatures. The outcry over Planned Parenthood's new in-school clinics could be even louder.

Parents should be alarmed by Planned Parenthood's latest effort to usurp their authority as the primary educators of their children, and the Los Angeles school system's acquiescence. As progressive groups continue to co-opt public schools, parents will increasingly face a decision about whether they must leave the system — or risk the state deciding it knows best for their children.

Kate Hardiman is a contributor to the Washington Examiner's Beltway Confidential blog. She taught high school in Chicago for two years while earning her M.Ed. and is now a J.D. candidate at Georgetown University Law Center.

HB 558-OPPOSE.pdf

Uploaded by: Linda Diefenbach

Position: UNF

HB 558-OPPOSE

This bill promotes a curriculum that overrides peoples deeply held beliefs and therefore violates the first amendment.

Why should schools be teaching this?

This bill is wretched. Please oppose.

Linda Diefenbach
Middletown, MD

HB558.pdf

Uploaded by: Mariam Canning

Position: UNF

I am writing in opposition to HB558. This framework should not be enshrined into law, as doing so would restrict the flexibility of local counties to address the specific needs of their communities. Instead, it's essential to empower local school boards to fulfill their elected duties and continue serving their communities effectively. This is a significant overreach by our state legislature which is likely why both unions and our MD State BOE oppose this legislation. There are several concerning areas but I intend to focus my testimony on **gender ideology in early elementary**. Children are uniquely impressionable. Gender dysphoria is a severe mental condition to be dealt with privately by a child's parent and their mental health provider. This attempt to mainstream mental illness sufficiently confuses children into believing they could be something they're not and primarily based on socially constructed gender stereotypes. Boys who like baby dolls may think... "well, maybe I'm a girl?" Why would our public school system believe this is a good idea? Why plant seeds of confusion...confusion that could very well lead to a private social transition within the school setting without parental consent? This isn't an unwarranted concern as schools in our county allow minors to change their pronouns, names, and clothing while denying parents the right to be involved. As benign as this may seem to some, it's completely inappropriate for a school system to assume this role of "socially transitioning" a child behind their parent's back. In fact, according to the Society for Evidence Based Gender Medicine ([SEGM](#)), children who socially transition are more likely to progress toward **irreversible medical interventions** such as beginning cross sex hormones and/or surgically altering their appearance;

"As the practice of early social gender transition becomes [more common](#), it is reasonable to expect that many more gender-variant youth will persist in their trans identity. This in turn will likely significantly increase the number of young people seeking hormonal and surgical transition, which is of concern because of the poor state of medical knowledge: the longest available set of outcomes of individuals who medically transition in adolescence and young adulthood tracks patients only to an [average of age 21](#), and the best evidence is rated as ["low"](#) or ["very low" quality](#)."

European countries have already begun to move [AWAY](#) from an "affirmation only" model of transgender care, instead prioritizing care of the child's peripheral mental health concerns. Introducing this type of biased and controversial information to our youngest learners has the potential to cause not only confusion but irreversible damage. Parents are best suited to decide what their own child is ready to learn, ESPECIALLY within the context of sex and gender identity. This is a shocking disregard for the primacy of parents.

Please consider this data presented here and essentially anything from **the Society for Evidence Based Gender Medicine** before you legally force this pseudo-science on the precious children of our state. Please do not just listen to/be informed by local activist groups. If the bill is to remain, consider delaying the gender topics until later years and please use EVIDENCE BASED content even with our older students. Believing you've been "born in the wrong body" is a mental condition just like anorexia or body integrity dysmorphia (BID). You wouldn't continue

to starve an anorexic or cut the health limbs off a BID patient...you treat the mind. As leaders in our State you are put in the unique position to protect our most vulnerable and hopefully, weigh community response. Consider the possibility that some of this information may actually cause more harm than good.

Best,

Mariam Canning

Huntingtown, MD

Oppose HB 558.pdf

Uploaded by: Mark Meyerovich

Position: UNF

Oppose HB 558

It is obvious that the bill aims to broadly expand health services in schools. Worse, it simultaneously strives to reduce or eliminate parental knowledge or involvement. The Framework diminishes the importance of parents, for example it states "family is a group of people that support each other." This is a state ideology, not based on any traditional values, that tries to replace parents with "trusted adults."

Parents must be involved whether they agree with the action or not. Parents are the foundational support in healthy families and provide strong support to growing children. 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. However, schools are not responsible for any negative consequences of their "frameworks." It would be parents who must deal with any consequences.

Thus, if parents want to opt out of de-facto mental health services provided by schools, they should be able to do so freely. There are multiple cultures, and among them there are strong differences of opinions on the issues of gender expression, sexual orientation and romantic attraction. Every culture, tradition, or family looks differently at such topics and at what age those are appropriate. The traditional values protect children from the chaos and temptations of free and diverse societies. It is the traditional values that grown children and young adults learn to lean on during difficult times. Schools must not subvert those values by forcing some arbitrary framework across the board.

The mandatory topics, along with goals and grading, force a one-size-fits-all approach on such a very sensitive subject. There is no intent to protect children's modesty or innocence. If not taught by parents, these topics should be taught by highly skilled therapists. How will schools find so many qualified instructors for such a comprehensive program? In addition, the topics are heavily influenced by the medical/pharmaceutical industry and predispose children to blind trust in the industry's services and interventions.

I strongly urge you to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,
Mark Meyerovich
Gaithersburg, MD

HB0558 Tesimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Mark Smoot

Position: UNF

Mark Smoot
Maryland Tax Paying Citizen
Re: HB0558

Dear Delegate Atterbeary,

There are many families from many walks of life living in the state of Maryland. The sensitive subjects of sexuality and race included in this bill should only be left to these families to determine what is acceptable, not decided by government officials. The moral values vary too much for a one size fits all social policy. Once these social trends of gender confusion and race obsession are outgrown, the amount of time wasted on this false information will never be regained. Usually, it seems to lead to unhappiness, anger or a self-absorbing conceit. Even worse, it can result in chemical or surgical mutilation.

Children are vulnerable to suggestion, especially when they aren't particularly special to their peers. An adult explaining that their born biology is to blame, whether it's sex or color, can be enticing as a solution. I hope everyone has the best intentions. I truly do.

Teaching students how to learn is great! Other than the usual reading writing and math, there are plenty of non-controversial useful life improving subjects that are largely ignored.

Please stop this harmful bill from passing.

Thank you,

Mark Smoot

Oppose HB055 Primary and Secondary Education.pdf

Uploaded by: Mary Jo Witte

Position: UNF

Oppose HB055 Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework

This bill that teaches Gender Ideology starting in kindergarten and is completely inappropriate for any child in grade school or high school and should never be brought into any classroom.

Young children should never be exposed to anything that goes against the teaching of their parents, as parents are the primary educators of their children. To make matters worse, God-fearing parents are not even given a chance to opt out of this disgraceful curriculum.

Gender Ideology has shown to be detrimental to many young people who have "transitioned" to the opposite and now deeply regret the permanent changes and sterility that have resulted.

For the sake of all Maryland children and young adults, keep our schools from these evil and dangerous ideology and vote "NO" on HB0558.

Thank you,

Mary Jo Witte

HB 558 xover health curriculum - EEE.pdf

Uploaded by: Mary Pat Fannon

Position: UNF



Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director
1217 S. Potomac Street
Baltimore, MD 21224
410-935-7281
marypat.fannon@pssam.org

BILL: HB 558
TITLE: Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework - Established
DATE: March 27,2024
POSITION: Unfavorable
COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four Maryland local school superintendents, **opposes** House Bill 558.

This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), in consultation with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), to develop a comprehensive health education framework that includes, at a minimum, specified topics. Each local board of education must create an age-appropriate curriculum that is consistent with the comprehensive health education framework as specified.

PSSAM strongly supports the current local approach to implementation of health curriculum consistent with State guidelines. PSSAM also shares concerns raised by local school boards and other advocacy organizations regarding legislative efforts to codify standardized curriculum, assessments, or standards. PSSAM maintains our longstanding position regarding curricular mandates, which highlights the critical nature of preserving local authority and oversight. Each Maryland local school systems must be afforded flexibility in developing curriculum that best reflects the specific, and diverse needs of their student population and local community. Again, local superintendents support robust and comprehensive instruction in health education, and believe that this objective is best accomplished by preserving local flexibility in implementing health curriculum.

For these reasons, PSSAM **opposes** House Bill 558 and kindly requests an **unfavorable** committee report.

OPPOSE HB558.pdf

Uploaded by: Meghan Barvir

Position: UNF

Good Morning Senator Feldman and Committee Members,
I am writing to urge an unfavorable vote on the SB version of HB558. It is an attack on local representation and parental rights.

Furthermore, I'd like to express my extreme disappointment, and frankly anger, at Ms. Atterbeary's decision to remove the parental right to opt out of gender identity and sexual orientation topics from HB558. These topics are included in MSDE's Health curriculum. The separation of these topics from the Family Life curriculum will ensure ALL children are exposed to these topics, beginning at 5 years old.

Ms. Atterbeary's amendment to HB558 acts to usurp parental rights by mandating this material in the curriculum with NO recourse for parents who object to these topics. Here are my questions for you and anyone who supports this bill:

1. What gives the State of Maryland the right to DENY my involvement in my MINOR child's education?
2. Why will my son be forced to learn about sexual orientation in Elementary School?
3. Why will my son be exposed to the subject of sexual orientation WITHOUT my involvement, while he is at school?
4. Why will seventh grade students learn about anal sex (as included in the MSDE Health curriculum)?
5. What happens to my ninth grade daughter (or any other high school student) when she stands up and walks out of her Health class because the material presented is so sexualized and disgusting that SHE deems it too much to bear? Will she be penalized? (Please keep in mind Health I and Health II are State requirements in order to graduate from high school).
6. What happens when my children are so uncomfortable learning about sexual orientation, sexual acts, and gender ideology from a TEACHER that they stand up and leave the classroom? Will they be forced to remain in the classroom, or do THEY have the right to object to these topics? Will their grades suffer if THEY refuse to take part in such lessons?

My children do not belong to the State of Maryland. I have extreme disdain for ANY legislation that ignores my God given right to raise my children as I see fit. I vehemently oppose HB558 and urge you and other Senators to vote AGAINST this bill. Vote down this bill and let's focus on teaching children to read, write, do math, and contribute to society without stealing their innocence.

I look forward to your responses to my questions. Thank you for taking the time to read this email.

Sincerely,
Meghan Barvir
Parent of two BEAUTIFUL and INNOCENT children

HB0558 2024.pdf

Uploaded by: Melissa Goshorn

Position: UNF

Hi my name is Melissa Macuci Goshorn and I am the mother to 3 children in Calvert County Public Schools.

I'm writing to you today urging you to **oppose MD HB558**, the "Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework." Delegate Atterbury tried to pass this bill last year, unsuccessfully with opposition from MABE, PSSAM and countless other individuals and organizations. If you listen to the testimony from last year, those in support of the bill continued to say "parents can opt out" and that was their justification to pass the bill. This year, in HB0558 you will notice that the opt out provision has been removed for Gender Identity education, which the framework suggests to begin in Pre-Kindergarten.

Why is it that Maryland Delegates want to require something upon all Maryland children, WITHOUT AN OPT OUT, when medical organizations and Countries around the world are turning away from gender affirming care?

Our children are the future and cannot be test subjects with unknown consequences.

A father in my community sent testimony against this bill that I want to share in mine as well.

"Who pays the cost if this policy is wrong?"

Who will suffer the consequences if this policy causes children to come home from school upset and endure nightmares, disturbs them to the point they need therapy, results in them engaging in sexual behavior long before they are ready thereby causing pregnancy and venereal disease, and so on?

Children will suffer the most, with the parents very close behind.

Since we parents will pay a huge cost if this policy is harmful, we have a right to decide what our children are exposed to in school. That right should be reflected in the law.

In short, since parents pay the cost for making wrong decisions about their children, they have more incentive than anyone to get those decisions right.

Members of the Maryland state legislature must oppose MD HB558.

Thank you,
Melissa Macuci Goshorn

oppose-hb558 -3-25-24.pdf

Uploaded by: Melissa Idleman

Position: UNF

Good morning,

I am writing to ask for an unfavorable vote on HB558.

Local boards of education were elected by the citizens in each district to represent them, their interests, and their needs. Stripping power from local elected boards of education is antithetical to our republic system of government.

This framework presents very controversial topics, of which there is no consensus. Schools should be teaching the facts: reading, writing, math, science, history, arts, etc. Sexual education should focus on biology and reproduction. It should not include lessons teaching children gender ideology or explicit sexual acts.

In this framework, kindergarteners will be taught gender ideology - including the belief that there are more than two genders and a person can choose their children. Gender ideology is not fact – it is a *belief* of some, but not all. In seventh grade, 12 -year-olds will be taught about anal sex and solo sex.

These topics are not appropriate for schools to teach. Instead, they should be discussed by parents or guardians, at their discretion. Parents have the fundamental right to direct the upbringing, care, and education of their children. This bill also violates the religious beliefs and teaching of many religions. Why would the State of Maryland want to trample on families' religious beliefs?

Removing the option for parents to opt-out of the gender ideology and sexual orientation pieces of this framework is a deliberate attempt to seize the rights of parents to the upbringing, care, and education of their children. It is not the state's job to override a families' moral and religious beliefs.

Forcing these topics on children, stripping power from local school boards, taking away the fundamental rights of parents to the care, upbringing and education of their children, and violating the religious beliefs of a huge number of Marylanders is a slap in the face to the American system of government, our Constitution, and parental rights.

When asked about what public schools should be doing to support and education LGBTQ students, Gov Moore stated "...we don't dictate to the local jurisdictions as to how their educational processes work...". This bill does exactly what Gov said the state is not doing.

The focus of the MSDE and the legislature should be to serve the best interests of our children - provide them with safe schools that focus on academics where they can learn and thrive. Our children deserve nothing less.

Thank you,

Melissa Idleman

Letter HB558.pdf

Uploaded by: Michael Rosado

Position: UNF

To whom it may Concern:

I am a resident of Maryland and I vehemently oppose HB0558. Any adult that wants to discuss sex and gender with a child who is not theirs should be removed from any position that puts them around children. This is sick and disgusting and plays right into what every groomer and pedophile wants. Anyone who is for this bill should seriously think about the enemy they are assisting.

Sincerely,

Michael Rosado (USA) vet

Vote NO HB55803262024.pdf

Uploaded by: Nancy Shih

Position: UNF

HB558 is a terrible bill that prohibits parents to opt out Gender Identity class. It's a violation of Parental Right! What can be more horrible than that parents cannot protect their own children! More outrageous is that Government enacts such autocracy!

Those who drafted the bill in the House must be possessed with the mindset of tyranny. Those who voted yes in the House must also have the same kind of mind. And I hope the EEE Senate Committee members can listen to the people this time.

Children should not be sexualized and confused with their own biological gender. It's horrifying that they are lured into hormone blockers and therapies. These procedures are irreversible! Eventually they are coerced to mutilate their body organs by surgeries! All these horrible things happened because kids are brainwashed by the false Gender Ideology! One should listen to the stories of the detransgenders or the Trans Regrets. Their lives were forever destroyed.

I am sure that the Senate members at EEE Committee don't want your children and your grandchildren to be exposed to such Gender Identity ideologies and go through such ordeals! Please vote NO to HB 558!

Nancy Shih

Ellicott City

HB558 Wtness Sign-up PDF new.pdf

Uploaded by: Patricia Fallon

Position: UNF

To: Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Subject: HB0558

Date: March 26, 2024

I strongly **OPPOSE** Bill HB0558. The Bill forces inappropriate sexual education and early sexualization of our children by the public school system. The school system needs to go back to **BASICS** and teach Reading, Writing, Math, and Science. 90% of the children in Baltimore City **cannot** read, write, or do math at grade level. 50% of the children in Baltimore County **cannot** read or write or do math at grade level. If children do not have these basic skills, how will they go on to higher education, have a job, buy a home, raise a family. Rather the State and school system wants to spend its time and money and resources on the sexualization of our children and force pornographic materials into the classrooms.

If the State and schools insist on teaching this material, the parents should have the right to opt their children out of the curriculum.

Patricia Fallon

14823 Hanover Pike

Upperco, MD 21155

Baltimore County

hanoverprf@comcast.net

HB0558Oppose.pdf

Uploaded by: Peggy Williams

Position: UNF

HB0558

Oppose

Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework – Established

Dear Committee Members:

I strongly oppose this bill. I am concerned about the loss of instructional time on core subjects, should school districts be required to teach the Framework. In the 2022-2023 school year, forty-seven (47%) percent of Maryland students from grades 3-8 were proficient in language arts. Twenty-five percent (25%) of students in grades 3-8 were proficient in math. Twenty-six percent (26%) of students in the eighth grade were 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 careers.

HB558 would take control away from local Boards of Education. This is an unwise choice because local Boards are best equipped to meet the challenges of their individual localities.

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.

Gender and sexuality are closely connected to religious and moral decisions that implicate the First Amendment. For example, 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 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)).

I ask that you consider opposing this bill in its entirety. Thank you for the service you render to Maryland.

Peggy Williams
Severna Park
D31

HB558 Unfavorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Rebekah Esko

Position: UNF

HB558 Unfavorable

As a voter, taxpayer, parent, and former teacher, I want you to know that Marylanders do not support HB558. This year, just like last year, parents' voices are strongly against this bill. Many felt that supporting this bill disqualified our former Superintendent to serve in Maryland. Each Maryland School District has its own needs and priorities.

Local schools and school boards need flexibility to meet the needs of the diverse students in our state. They know the students and their backgrounds and cultures. The state school board does not.

Disallowing parental opt-out is extreme and culturally insensitive. The result of this bill would be more students dropping out of public school because of the school system's lack of understanding and respect for their diverse cultures. Parents, not state curriculum committees, have the Constitutional right to direct the upbringing of their children.

HB558 is unnecessary and would be a detriment to culturally-informed education.

I don't want to see the state take over our high-performing schools or see our dedicated teachers and school board silenced.

The bill would create a hostile relationship between the state vs local school boards and superintendents and give the unelected state school board and superintendent way too much control.

Incidentally, Senator Lam who sponsored the bill last year, stated in a committee hearing about HB119 "If it doesn't pass, that's fine." So no one should feel any pressure to support the bill.

I urge you to do the right thing and give this bill an unfavorable report.

HB 0558 - EEE - Comp Health Ed Framework - UNF.pdf

Uploaded by: SHARON CARRICK

Position: UNF



Ella Ennis, Legislative Chairman
Maryland Federation of Republican Women
PO Box 6040, Annapolis MD 21401
Email: eee437@comcast.net

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chairman
and Members of the Education, Energy and The Environment Committee
Maryland Senate
Annapolis, Maryland

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members,

RE: **HB 558** – Primary & Secondary Education – Comprehensive Health Education Framework –
Established – **OPPOSE**

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.

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

It is apparent that the intent of this bill, the "*Blueprint for the Future*", and other recently proposed legislation is to dramatically expand health services in the school setting and to substantially reduce or even eliminate parental knowledge and involvement.

The *Framework* diminishes or eliminates the importance of parents and traditional families -- "*family is a group of people that support each other.*" That is an over-simplified and incomplete description of a family, and flagrantly ignores biological and legal relationships.

We object to implementation of the *Framework* for these reasons:

- **Standard 1a: Mental and Emotional Health**

- o 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.

- o 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, monetary and emotional.

- o 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



Ella Ennis, Legislative Chairman
Maryland Federation of Republican Women
PO Box 6040, Annapolis MD 21401
Email: eee437@comcast.net

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. Edible cannabis products are likely to become an increasing danger as recreational cannabis is rolled out.

- **Standard 1c: Family Life and Human Sexuality**

- o Kindergarteners will “*identify different types of families (e.g., single-parent, same gender, intergenerational, cohabitating, adoptive, foster, etc.)*” with no mention of twoparent, heterosexual, or married families.

- o 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.*

- o 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?

We are concerned that this intersectionality of education and health services could lead to children being prescribed:

- (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 submit to actions that permanently remove their ability to reproduce and become a parent themselves.

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

Sincerely,
Ella Ennis, MFRW Legislative Chair

HB0558 Howard Co BOE Testimony 032724 for EEE - He

Uploaded by: Staff Howard County

Position: UNF



**Board of Education
of Howard County**

Jennifer Swickard Mallo, *Chair*

Yun Lu, Ph.D., *Vice Chair*

Linfeng Chen, Ph.D.

Jacky McCoy

Jolene Mosley

Robyn C. Scates, Esq.

Antonia Watts

Lamia Ayaz
Student Member

William J. Barnes
*Acting Superintendent,
Secretary/Treasurer*

**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate,
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 27, 2024**

HB0558: UNFAVORABLE

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

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) opposes **HB0558 Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework – Established** as a mandate on local school system curriculum.

HB0558 requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), in consultation with the Maryland Department of Health, to develop a comprehensive Health Education framework that included topics currently found in the [Maryland Comprehensive Health Education Framework](#), which was last adopted by the Maryland State Board of Education (MSBE) in June 2021. The bill additionally calls on local boards of education to adopt policies, guidelines, and procedures for a parent or guardian to opt out of the Family Life and Human Sexuality unit. A local board could not authorize a parent or guardian to opt a student out of education related to HIV or AIDs prevention. Annually, local boards of education are required to report to MSDE on the actions taken to comply with the requirements of the bill.

While the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) health staff and the Board support comprehensive instruction in Health Education and the intent of HB0558, and currently follow the Framework adopted by MSBE, preserving local control in the implementation of health curriculum is imperative. HB0558 is both redundant of, and contradictory to, current Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR). Currently families can opt out of the Family Life and Human Sexuality unit, which has course objectives about HIV and AIDs. There are also course objectives for HIV and AIDs in the Disease Prevention unit, which does not allow for a family to opt out.

The amendment to remove the provision of HB0558 that allowed families to opt out of “gender identity and sexual orientation topics” in each grade in which those topics are taught is an improvement. Currently, these words are woven throughout the Framework. For example, the elementary objective 1a.5.13 states “Explain why it is wrong to tease or bully others based on personal characteristics such as body type, race, gender, sexuality, appearance, mannerisms, and the way one dresses or acts.” While perhaps an unintended consequence of the bill, allowing families to opt out of each unit/lesson containing these topics would have meant students would miss other important health education instruction and may lead to logistical impacts in handling all such requests per unit.

As a legislative platform, however, the Board supports local decision-making in the development of curriculum and policy that account for a balance of educational practices, available resources, public input, and accountability that is informed and guided by State Board established standards and models, rather than legislative mandates. Legislation that limits local board decision-making authority may weaken the Board’s bond with the local community and adversely impact the community’s participation in the governance and operation of the school system. For these reasons, we urge an UNFAVORABLE report of HB0558 from this Committee.

HB 558 Written Testimony to EEE.pdf

Uploaded by: Suzie Scott

Position: UNF



Bill: HB 558

Title: Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework - Established

Hearing Date: March 27, 2024

Position: UNFAVORABLE

Committee: Education, Energy and the Environment

Moms for Liberty Maryland Legislative Committee urges an unfavorable report for HB 558. Just as in the last General Assembly when this bill was introduced as HB119/SB199, there is a broad and major consensus against this legislation. HB 558 is being opposed by MSDE, the MD State Board of Education, the MD Association of Boards of Education and the Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland. This bill is also opposed by many local municipalities as well, for reasons that this legislation usurps the local authority of local school systems. Authority for educational decisions for a public school system should reside at the local level.

Not only is this legislation an infringement on local authority, it also acts to disenfranchise the voters who elect their district representatives to their local Boards of Education. This bill would silence the voters' voices and hinder their expressing interests in matters concerning their local school systems. **A one size fits all approach to education via legislation mandating frameworks and course content is a very slippery slope to which many various special interests as well as local government bodies are vehemently opposed.**

In addition to the infringement on local control, Moms for Liberty Maryland strongly opposes this bill on the grounds that it is an infringement on fundamental parental rights. Parents entrust their children to the public school system to provide an academic education not an indoctrination into ideologies

that run counter to a family's morals and values. **By restricting parents' ability to opt their children out of content and curriculum that runs counter to their belief systems, this bill undermines parents' fundamental rights to direct the education, morals and health decisions for their children.**

The current MSDE framework for Comprehensive Health Education contains the provision for teaching gender ideology topics to kindergarteners. The ideas this framework proposes to codify into law include teaching 5 year olds that there are more than two genders and that they can choose their gender. Gender ideology is not factual but this framework wants to treat this controversial topic as fact. The sort of gender ideology indoctrination contained in the current Comprehensive Health Framework is harmful to young children. Planting unsubstantiated theories into the minds of young children is abusive and dangerous. https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/Health/Health_Education_Framework_July_2022.pdf

The 7th grade framework discusses teaching 7th graders as young as 12 years old about "anal and solo sex." Many parents object to this subject matter being taught to their 7th graders on moral and religious grounds. By violating personally held religious beliefs held by various religious institutions, this legislation is a clear infringement on parents' fundamental rights to direct the education and moral training of their children.

Why would the State of Maryland want to trample on families' sincerely held religious beliefs?

By removing the option for parents to opt-out of the Gender Ideology and Sexual Orientation pieces of the current framework, this bill is a deliberate and malicious attack on the rights of parents. **It is not in the realm of the State of Maryland's authority to override a family's moral or religious beliefs.**

Moms for Liberty Maryland humbly requests that this committee take into serious consideration the overwhelming disapproval for this bill. The amendments to remove Gender Ideology from the Family Life component of the framework and removing an opt out provision have only made this bill more onerous. **We urge an Unfavorable Report for HB 558.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzie Scott, Chair

Moms for Liberty MD Legislative Committee

Letter re HB558.pdf

Uploaded by: Tabitha Bathgate

Position: UNF

March 25, 2024

RE: HB558

I am writing to ask you for an unfavorable vote on HB558.

Local boards of education are elected by the citizens in each district to represent them, their interests and their needs. Stripping power from local boards of education is antithetical to our republic system of government.

This framework presents very controversial topics of which there are no consensus. Schools should be teaching the facts: Reading, Writing, Math, Science, History (true American history, not removing parts that don't fit an agenda) & arts. Sexual Education should focus on biology and reproduction - not lessons teaching our children gender ideology or explicit sexual acts. Boys are biologically boys and girls are biologically girls - there are no other genders. I do not want my children or anyone else's children being taught anything that is not scientifically true - this is merely dumbing down our children and our society.

In this framework, kindergarteners will be taught gender ideology - including the belief that there are more than two genders and a person can choose - that is absolute nonsense. This is a belief, not a fact, of some but not all. In seventh grade, 12 year olds will be taught about anal sex and solo sex. Many parents do not agree with public schools teaching seventh graders about different sex acts – I, for one, do not agree and will not allow my children to be taught this disgusting curriculum therefore, I have taken my children out of the public system and if this nonsense continues, I'm sure many others will do the same. But I am here to speak for those who do not have the ability to do what I have done and I will fight for the innocent children who are being subjected to this.

Our public school system needs to go back to the basics and again teach children how to learn, how to prosper and how to think - NOT WHAT TO THINK BUT HOW TO THINK.

Parents have the fundamental right to direct the upbringing, care and education of their children. These topics are not appropriate for schools to teach. This should be discussed by parents or guardians at their discretion. Forcing these topics on children is child abuse in my opinion.

The focus of the MSDE and the legislature should be to serve the best interests of our children - provide them with safe schools that focus on academics where they can learn and thrive - our children deserve nothing less. This bill goes against all of these principles and if passed will be a

danger to our kids and a slap in the face to us as parents. I stand against this bill and I hope you do as well.

Tabitha Bathgate
Colora, MD 21917
(443) 553-9109

HB0558.pdf

Uploaded by: Tara Thompson

Position: UNF

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

Tibbals_ OPPOSE HB 558_ Primary and Secondary Edu

Uploaded by: Trudy Tibbals

Position: UNF

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

Maryland Legislature

Uploaded by: Victoria Harvey

Position: UNF

travelplanne

HB 558 OPPOSE

Victoria Harvey

travelplanner@comcast.net – 443.787.4112

1420 Valbrook Ct. N., Bel Air, MD 21015

HB 558 OPPOSE
Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Education
Framework - Established

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Wednesday, March 27, 2024 at 1:00pm

Dear Delegates Atterbeary, Fair, Feldmark, Grossman, Palakovich Carr, Vogel, and Wells :

My name is Victoria Harvey & I oppose HB 558. I am asking for an unfavorable vote on HB 558.

As a democrat I find it repugnant that this bill is doing exactly what republicans accuse our party of - sexualizing children and more centralized government. This bill also usurps a parents' right to make decisions regarding how and when children are educated about sensitive issues such as gender ideology and anal sex by stripping the option of an opt-out.

Children mature at different levels, the final word on these types of controversial subjects should solely be by parents and not the state.

The attempted centralization of state power will render the local board of education impotent. The citizens of each county vote on those that serve on the board, these board members know and understand their local community more than any lawmaker in Annapolis.

This bill does something that very few are able to do, unite both sides of the aisle against the Maryland state legislature. **To quote Governor Moore "...we don't dictate to the local jurisdictions as to how their educational processes work..." This is exactly what this bill does.**

As a mother of a young child, I am appalled by this bill. I am once again asking for an unfavorable vote on HB 558.

Oppose HB558 - Google Docs.pdf

Uploaded by: Victoria Millsaps

Position: UNF

March 26, 2024

Opposition to HB558

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

As a mom of five, the religious aspect of this bill hits the hardest for me as a parent. My husband and I will love our children no matter what, but while they are in our care we will raise them up with our fundamentals stemming from the teachings of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. We are accountable to only him. I am accountable to my Lord on how I raise my children. First and foremost we teach them to love and show kindness to everyone. However, the idea of gender fluidity and bouncing between genders is not something we are teaching our children as truth. It is an extremely dangerous concept that will have and has had disastrous consequences. Especially since it is near impossible to show the “sincerity” of how someone self identifies.

A parental opt out was the bare minimum that I would accept and now that is being taken away. I have one out of my four school age kids in the public school system. The top down authoritarian leadership that pushes their ideologies on our youth is why more and more will withdraw and homeschool.

Risk of First Amendment Implications

Gender and sexuality are closely connected to religious and moral decisions that implicate the First Amendment. For example, 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 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)).

Loss of Autonomy for Local Boards of Education

HB558 would take control away from local Boards of Education. This is an unwise choice because local Boards are best equipped to meet the challenges of their individual localities.

Lack of an Opt-Out Option for Parents

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.

Loss of Instructional Time on Core Subjects

I am concerned about the loss of instructional time on core subjects, should school districts be required to teach the Framework. In the 2022-2023 school year, forty-seven (47%) percent of Maryland students from grades 3-8 were proficient in language arts. Twenty-five percent (25%) of students in grades 3-8 were proficient in math. Twenty-six percent (26%) of students in the eighth grade were 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 careers.

I ask that you consider opposing this bill in its entirety. Thank you for the service you render to Maryland.

Sincerely,

Victoria Millsaps

Calvert County, MD



ReplyReply allForward

Add reaction

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OPPOSING HB 0558.pdf

Uploaded by: VINCENT GISRIEL, JR

Position: UNF

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HB 0558 ENTITLED "PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION-
COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH EDUCATION FRAMEWORK – ESTABLISHED"

Dear Senators,

I encourage you to vote AGAINST HB 0558 entitled "Primary and Secondary Education-Comprehensive Health Education Framework – Established". Health education should be taught in the home, and not in the classroom. Thank you for your consideration.

Vincent dePaul Gisriel, Jr.

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