

## **Support with Amendment: HB 558 Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework - Established**

2/5/2024

Maryland House  
Ways and Means Committee  
Room 131  
House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the pediatric nurse practitioners (PNPs) and fellow pediatric-focused advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP) Chesapeake Chapter, I am writing to express our **Support with Amendment for HB558 Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework - Established.**

We support the provision of comprehensive and age-appropriate health education in both primary and secondary schools. This bill would provide the framework for health education topics that are critical to the health, growth and development of youth. 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 bill language specifies that it requires each County Board to establish a committee composed of educators, health experts, and members of the local community to review and comment on whether the curriculum materials are consistent with the comprehensive health education framework. We would request that the bill be amended to specifically specify that the health experts that will be serving on these committees specifically include pediatricians or pediatric nurse practitioners with expertise in both child and adolescent medicine.

Without comprehensive education programs in the schools, many students will not have an opportunity to gain the education and insight that would be provided through this curriculum. Therefore MD Chesapeake NAPNAP supports the provision of comprehensive and age-appropriate health education in both primary and secondary schools but does not support the parental “opt out” options for family life, human sexuality, gender identity, and sexual orientation topics. These topics are very complex and impactful on a child and adolescent’s physical and mental health well-being. Allowing parents to prevent their children from learning about these subject matters denies these children access to critical information that may assist them in addressing these issues in their lives, with their peers, and in relationships. These actions support a “don’t say gay” mindset that is detrimental to the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTQIA+ youth, and is associated with higher rates of suicide. We also strongly object to the parental/guardian “opt out” for HIV and AIDS prevention. This a public health matter, and failure to provide this education risks harm to both the children who do not receive it, as well as the entirety of Maryland. It is clear within the literature that education on prevention leads to lower rates of transmission. Therefore we strongly urge the opt out provisions be removed from the legislation.

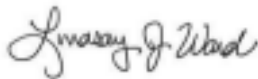
For these reasons the Maryland Chesapeake Chapter of NAPNAP extends their **Support with Amendment: HB 558 Primary and Secondary Education-Comprehensive Health Education Framework.**

The pediatric advanced practice nurses of your state are grateful to you for your attention to these crucial issues. The members of Chesapeake Chapter of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners are committed to improving the health and advocating for Maryland's pediatric patients. If we can be of any further assistance, or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact JD Murphy, legislative committee co-chair, at [jmurph89@jh.edu](mailto:jmurph89@jh.edu).

Sincerely,



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