

March 18th, 2025

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

Dear Honorable 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) MD Chesapeake Chapter, we are writing to express our **support of HB161: Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework – Established.**

We support the provision of comprehensive, evidence-based, and age-appropriate health education in both primary and secondary schools. This framework of health education includes 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 is a matter of public health and in a time when science is increasingly being ignored, we urge the Maryland legislature to trust the advice of the health professionals that have dedicated their lives to helping children.

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. While some parents may feel this education is uncomfortable, there is significant evidence that supports the benefits of early discussions of family life, human sexuality, gender identity, and sexual orientation topics. A comprehensive review was published in 2021, summarizing the impact of comprehensive sex ed, which include reduction of homophobia, bullying, intimate-partner violence (IPV), sexual victimization including child sexual abuse, increased bystander intervention related to abuse and IPV, and improved communication skills in relationships, disclosure of dangerous behaviors to trusted adults, and social-emotional learning, such as increased self-esteem and body image¹. Allowing parents to prevent their children from learning about these subject matters denies these children access to critical information can impact their overall development and disallow the possible prevention of a sexual transmitted disease including HIV, teen pregnancy, or IPV.

The bill would help to end the current alternative curriculum being encouraged within Carroll County Public Schools, which sets a dangerous precedent by allowing biased groups to influence and dictate curriculum based on personal opinions. We have evidence that this option is being pushed as the first option, creating an “opt-in” approach, with members of our organization who are CCPS parents being contacted eight or more times to select their choice of health curriculum, contrary to current COMAR guidelines of “opt-out.” The CCPS exclusionary health curriculum option is detrimental to the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTQIA+ youth and their families, and is associated with higher rates of bullying, mental distress, and suicide. Parents in same-sex partnerships or parents of these youth are being denied their rights to exist without discrimination and exclusion. It is a fabrication for some to

state there is no consensus regarding these issues, as all of the top medical and psychological associations all adamantly support inclusion, support, and affirmation regarding LGBTQIA+ youth². Sexual identity is no more of a choice than someone's race or genetic ancestry, so should be treated as such without segregation of educational curriculum. All parents are encouraged to use their parental rights and will continue to have the ability to opt-out of certain educational topics, but having a public school system clearly supporting exclusion of certain groups while ignoring evidence-based practices is not appropriate, and we are concerned about how this could further spread.

For these reasons the Maryland Chesapeake Chapter of NAPNAP extend our **support of HB161: Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework – Established**. The pediatric advanced practice nurses of your state are grateful to you for your attention to these crucial issues. The MD Chesapeake Chapter of the NAPNAP membership includes over 200 primary and acute care pediatric nurse practitioners who are committed to improving the health and wellbeing of and advocating for Maryland's children. If we can be of any further assistance, or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Chesapeake Chapter legislative committee or president, Dr. Yvette Laboy at mdchesnapnapleg@outlook.com.

Sincerely,

Yvette Laboy

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1. Eva S., and Lisa D. Lieberman. "Three Decades of Research: The Case for Comprehensive Sex Education." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 68, no. 1 (January 2021): 13–27. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2020.07.036>.

1. GLAAD. "Medical Association Statements in Support of Health Care for Transgender People and Youth." GLAAD, June 26, 2024. <https://glaad.org/medical-association-statements-supporting-trans-youth-healthcare-and-against-discriminatory/>.