

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

HB0161 - Compressive Health Education Framework

Position - Favorable

I'm writing today to urge the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee to support HB0161, the Compressive Health Education Framework bill, which will update our current legislation around Health Education.

This bill will make sure that our children receive the education they need to foster their physical, emotional, and mental health and well-being now and throughout their lives. Having read the current Framework, I appreciate the medically accurate, scientific, research-based, best-in-class way our State Department of Education presents the knowledge our children need to thrive.

I understand some people are concerned about portions of the Framework dealing with sexuality. I believe, as evidenced in the current Framework, that our Department of Education has incorporated these topics appropriately. And I trust that, as outlined in the bill, my county board of education will develop a specific curriculum that addresses these subjects in a way that fulfills the law while accounting for community review and input. And I am pleased to see that there is an opt-out available for parents who prefer their children not attend certain classes.

This is a bill that I wish had been in effect when I was growing up. I both experienced and was witness to episodes of sexually charged activities that I wish I had been better prepared to handle. All children, at appropriate age levels, need to develop awareness of and options for responding to a variety of situations. This bill will help accomplish that in a way that makes all children more confident and comfortable.

This bill will help educate and protect all our children in many ways. It will:

- Teach children about respecting other people's differences
- Teach children that they and every child deserve to be treated with kindness
- Help children who have a different family structure feel seen and welcomed
- Help children who do not have adults in their lives with the wherewithal or knowledge to help them understand health issues, of any kind, they may be dealing with

I urge all committee members to support this bill and move it forward with a favorable report to the Senate.

Thank you for your time and consideration today.

Dawn Sacks
Harford County, Maryland