

Heather Fletcher

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March 18, 2025

Dear Honorable Members of the Maryland Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

Thank you for your service and dedication during this legislative session. I am writing to express my grave concern over the proposed bill [HB0161](#). If enacted, this legislation would undermine the critical role of parents in making educational decisions for their children and remove the authority of local school boards. As elected officials, you bear a fundamental responsibility to uphold our Constitution and protect the well-being of all Maryland citizens, especially our children. It is essential that your decisions reflect not only the best interests of individuals but also protect the natural and legal rights of parents.

Currently, Maryland Code Regulations 13A.04.18.01 categorize "Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation" under "Family Life and Human Sexuality" and mandate that parents have the right to opt their children out of these lessons. These regulations also specify that direct teaching of family life and human sexuality indicators and objectives will begin in or prior to grade 5.

However, if HB0161 passes, it will create a separate teaching category for "Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation," removing the parental opt-out option for this subject. By eliminating the opt-out, HB0161 undermines the fundamental right of parents to guide their children's moral and educational development. Parents, not the state, are best positioned to determine what content is age-appropriate and aligns with their family's values.

Additionally, the bill would allow the introduction of this material to begin as early as Pre-K, exposing young children to complex and potentially confusing concepts about gender and sexuality at a stage when their understanding is still developing. It is developmentally inappropriate and harmful to engage young children in such complex discussions, and this premature exposure could have unintended negative consequences.

This bill undermines the authority of local Boards of Education and limits voters' ability to influence their local schools. If HB0161 passes, it would force each county board to designate a school health services program coordinator to implement state and local health policies in public schools. This health coordinator would ensure that public schools adhere to local health services guidelines, effectively eliminating local control. It also mandates that local Boards of Education update the Comprehensive Health Education Framework in the manner and at the time the state deems necessary. This top-down approach is unconstitutional and contradicts the principle of government "of the people, for the people, by the people."

I urge you to consider the long-term impacts this bill will have on all Maryland families. I hope you will make a decision that reflects both the best interests of Maryland's children and the rights of parents to determine their children's upbringing. Please vote **UNFAVORABLY** on HB0161!

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Heather Fletcher

Candidate for the Frederick County Board of Education

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Background: The [Comprehensive Health Education Framework](#) originated from the radical activist groups [Advocates for Youth](#), [Answer](#), and [SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change](#) in their [National Sex Education Standards: Core Content and Skills, K–12](#) document. [Advocates for Youth](#) and [SIECUS](#) are partners of [Planned Parenthood](#) who receives Federal, State, and Local Funding from tax-payer dollars. The second edition of the [National Sex Education Standards: Core Content and Skills, K–12](#) has been released and it may be adopted by the Maryland State Board of Education this year. The [Johns Hopkins Medicine Emerge Clinic](#) provides puberty blockers and hormones to children 5-years-old and older; if the child has Medicaid, taxpayers will fund these treatments.