

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5306

As of January 27, 2005

Title: An act relating to sexual health education.

Brief Description: Regarding sexual health education.

Sponsors: Senators Weinstein, Rockefeller, Pridemore, McAuliffe, Shin, Fairley, Prentice, Keiser, Regala, Brown, Kline and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 1/24/05.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Staff: Sharon Swanson (786-7447)

Background: Many believe that it should be a public health priority for young people to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to make responsible, fully informed decisions about their sexual health. The Department of Health and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction prepared new Guidelines for Sexual Health Information and Disease Prevention as an instrument to guide teachers, guest speakers and school districts with the design of their sexual health education. Currently, school districts are not required to offer sexual health education but the districts that chose to participate develop their own curriculum.

Summary of Bill: Every school district that offers sexual health education must incorporate the January 2005 Guidelines for Sexual Health Information and Disease Prevention. In addition to abstinence, sexual health education must teach medically accurate information about the effectiveness of contraceptives and other family planning options in a comprehensive manner.

The Department of Health shall adopt such rules as are necessary to determine what is medically accurate information according to the research conducted in compliance with scientific methods and published in peer-review journals.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The spread of sexually transmitted diseases is increasing. Twelve thousand teenage girls give birth each year in our state. Sexual health education needs to be consistent, comprehensive and accurate so young people can make informed choices about their sexual

health. Abstinence should be taught in addition to other effective means of birth control and safety measures. Not all young people abstain from sexual activity. The kids who do not wait should have the information necessary to protect themselves from pregnancy and disease. Responsible well informed kids make responsible well informed choices.

Testimony Against: Making teenagers aware of the physical consequences of sexual activity does not prepare them for the emotional consequences of sex. Teaching methods of safety other than abstinence only leads to temptation and confusion. The comprehensive approach sends a mixed message to young people. This bill does not talk about healthy relationships and does not address the fact that young people should wait for marriage before becoming sexually active. The bill expects less from young people rather than more.

Who Testified:PRO: Maxine Hayes, Department of Health(DOH); Judith Billings, Governor's Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS; Beth Reis, Public Health of Seattle, King County; Mary KenField, Parent Teacher Association; Don Rash, Association of Washington School Principals; Susie Tracy, Washington State Medical Association; Laurie Lippold, American Academy of Pediatrics, Washington Chapter; Alex Estes, Youth; Debbie Ellis, Parent; Dorothy Young Sale, League of Women's Voters.

CON: Hillary Hanson, Abstinence Wait-Training and Relationship Education (AWARE); Kayla Fischer, AWARE; Justin Hollister, AWARE; Jeff Kemp, Families Northwest; Ruby Hogan, Parent; Bob Higley, Washington Evangelicals for Responsible Government (WERG); Kalylene Hinderliter, Sexuality, Health and Relationship Education (SHARE); Susan Shoemaker.

Signed In/Did Not Testify: PRO: Adrienne Stuart, American Association of University Women (AAUW); Carol Mohler, AAUW; Vic Colman, DOH.

CON: Sharon Hanek; Susan Remlinger, AWARE; Jim Gaenfal, AWARE; Lois Gibson, AWARE; Marilyn Gaenfal, AWARE; Judy Berry, AWARE; Shawn Perez, AWARE; Leanna Benn, TEEN-AID; Jack Herbert, Share; Lisa Merrifield, SHARE; Jean Chaffee, Parent; Sarah Chaffee.