

May 18, 2021

The Honorable Barbara Lee
2470 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cory Booker
717 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Alma Adams
2436 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mazie Hirono
109 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Lee, Representative Adams, Senator Booker, and Senator Hirono:

As organizations committed to building a world where every young person has access to high quality, evidence-informed, medically accurate, and complete sex education that meets their needs, we write to you in support of the Real Education and Access for Healthy Youth Act (REAHYA). This bill would make needed investments in inclusive and honest sex education programs and create linkages to sexual health services for young people who face the greatest barriers to information and access to care.

For many of these young people, a lack of comprehensive in scope, confidential, equitable, and accessible sex education and sexual health services is not unfamiliar, but rather a longstanding manifestation of white supremacy, which has touched every aspect of our history, culture, and institutions, including the education and healthcare systems. We commend this legislation for its focus on reproductive justice and equity and believe that sexual health education that is comprehensive in scope is a crucial component of dismantling these systems of oppression.

We know there is a gap between the sexual health information that many young people receive--if any information at all--and what they need and deserve, based on expert standards. Twenty-nine states and the District of Columbia mandate sex education and 15 states do not require sex education or HIV/STI instruction to be age-appropriate, medically accurate, culturally responsive, or are evidence-based or evidence-informed.¹ In fact, nine states explicitly require instruction that discriminates against LGBTQ+ people.² Furthermore, Black young people are more likely to receive abstinence-only instruction.³ Research shows that abstinence-only instruction, also known as “sexual risk avoidance” instruction, is ineffective in comparison to sex education.

¹ SIECUS (November 2020). <https://siecus.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/SIECUS-Sex-Ed-State-Law-and-Policy-Chart.pdf>

² SIECUS (November 2020). <https://siecus.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/SIECUS-Sex-Ed-State-Law-and-Policy-Chart.pdf>

³ Kuehnel, S. S. (2009). Abstinence-Only Education Fails African-American Youth, 86 WASH. U. L. REV. 1241. Retrieved from https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1136&context=law_lawreview

Our organizations strongly support this bill and the investments it makes to support high quality sexual health education and funding for linkages to clinical care that is confidential, culturally responsive, and meets the needs of all young people. Everyone--no matter who they are or where they live--deserves the information and care they need to achieve their goals and live their lives on their terms. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth
AIDS Alabama
AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families
AIDS Foundation Chicago
The AIDS Institute
American Academy of HIV Medicine
American Atheists
American Humanist Association
American Public Health Association
American Sexual Health Association
The American Society for Reproductive Medicine
APLA Health
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Aunt Rita's Foundation
Black AIDS Institute
Cascade AIDS Project
Catholics for Choice
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Disability Rights
Center for LGBTQ Economic Advancement & Research (CLEAR)
Center for Reproductive Rights
Colorado Organizations and Individuals Responding to HIV/AIDS (CORA)
Desiree Alliance
Equality California
EyesOpenIowa
Fact Forward
Girls Inc.
Girls Inc. NH
Girls Inc. of Alameda County
Girls Inc. of Bay County
Girls Inc. of Carpinteria
Girls Inc. of Chicago
Girls Inc. of Greater Houston
Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara
Girls Inc. of Long Island
Girls Inc. of Memphis

Girls Inc. of Metro Denver
Girls Inc. of Orange County
Girls Inc. of San Antonio
Girls Inc. of the Island City
Girls Inc. of the Valley
Girls Inc. of Wayne County
Girls Incorporated of Kingsport
Girls Incorporated of Sioux City
Girls Incorporated of Washington County MD
Gladys Allen Brigham Community Center/Girls Inc. of the Berkshires
Guttmacher Institute
Health Connected
Healthy Teen Network
HIV + Hepatitis Policy Institute
Human Rights Watch
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda
interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth
International Association of Providers of AIDS Care
Ipas
Jewish Women International
Lambda Legal
Mazzoni Center
Medical Students for Choice
Michigan Organization on Adolescent Sexual Health (MOASH)
Modern Military Association of America
NARAL Pro-Choice America
NASTAD
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)
National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Coalition of STD Directors
National Council of Jewish Women
National Equality Action Team (NEAT)
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association
National Health Law Program
National Institute for Reproductive Health
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Network of Abortion Funds
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Working Positive Coalition
North Carolina AIDS Action Network
one-n-ten
People For the American Way

PFLAG National
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Population Institute
Positive Women's Network-USA
Power to Decide
Prevention Access Campaign
Reframe Health and Justice
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Reproductive Health Access Project
RISE: Healthy for Life
SHAPE America
SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change
Silver State Equality-Nevada
Southwest Center
Teen Health Mississippi
Treatment Action Group
Union for Reform Judaism
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
Whitman-Walker Institute
Women of Reform Judaism
WV FREE