

State House Testimony

HB 293 Opponent

December 2, 2009

Madam Chairman Boyd, Vice Chair Carney, Ranking Minority Member Wachtmann and committee members:

My name is Catherine Wood. I have worked as a teacher and director of abstinence education programs for over 22 years. I also serve on the Steering Committee of the Ohio Adolescent Health Association. I speak in opposition to House Bill 293, The Ohio Prevention First Act that would eliminate the abstinence until marriage education law in the Ohio Revised Code, Section 3313.60 and Section 3313.6011. HB 293 would also increase family planning and comprehensive contraception sex education in Ohio.

Planned Parenthood and Family Planning programs call themselves evidenced-based. We would question that evidence. A report called Emerging Answers 2007 by Douglas Kirby was analyzed by The Institute For Research and Evaluation and their findings reveal a different analysis of the data than Kirby reported. In 115 of their best evaluation studies covering 20 years of research, results of school-based contraceptive programs follows:

- None were shown to increase the number of teens who used condoms consistently for more than 3 months.
- None demonstrated a decrease in teen pregnancy or STD rates for any subgroup for any period of time.
- None increased both teen abstinence and condom use (by sexually active) for the same time period.
- Of the 25 school-based contraceptive programs that measured condom use, 64% did not increase condom use for any subgroup for any time period even though the median follow-up time period for those programs was only 4 months.
- Only two contraceptive programs (measured in five studies) delayed the onset of teen sexual intercourse for 12 months for the target population.

This is a travesty that the great state of Ohio would even consider changing the law of Ohio to include failed programs that call themselves evidenced-based when they have no positive evidence that they decrease teen pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases and none that increase condom use - all which Planned Parenthood and family planning claims to do. If the goal is to reduce teen pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases, Planned Parenthood is not capable of doing so as revealed in the studies mentioned.

The Ohio Revised Code which in Section 3313.60 and section 3313.6011 requires that venereal disease education shall emphasize abstinence from sexual activity as the only protection that is 100% effective against unwanted pregnancy, STDs and the sexual transmission of the virus that causes AIDS. There are six other criteria in the law including teaching that teens should abstain from sexual activity until after marriage. Planned Parenthood curriculum and the Centers For Disease Control curriculum do not mention marriage or encourage it so Planned Parenthood contraceptive sex education does not meet the current law for sex education in Ohio.

Members of the Ohio Adolescent Health Association serve over 200,000 students annually with abstinence until marriage education. We provide medically accurate information on sexually transmitted infections and diseases, teen pregnancy, healthy and unhealthy relationships and marriage education. For the past 10 years we have provided abstinence education that meets the criteria of the Ohio Revised Code, Sections that are being deleted by this bill. We would ask that you review the evidence of success in these short 10 years.

The teen birth rate in Ohio has decreased 36% from 1991 to 2004 saving Ohio taxpayers an estimated \$300 million in 2004 alone according to a report from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Teen abortion rates in Ohio have also decreased by 35% between 1997 and 2008 among women 18 years old and younger according to the 2008 Report on Induced Abortions in Ohio. In the counties where our program has implemented the most curriculum we have seen much evidence that teen birth rates, abortion rates and STI/STDs are decreasing. Our program serves around 25,000 students each year and provides programming to 27 Ohio counties. We have evidence that teen birth rates, teen abortion rates and STDs are decreasing in several of our counties even up to 50%. I have attached those reports for your reading.

Together with abstinence programs in the state the Ohio Adolescent Health Association members serve 71 of Ohio's 88 counties. We have positive evaluations from classroom teachers and parents all over the state. Our third-party independent evaluation results show statically significant results. Although our critics accuse abstinence education of ignoring students who are already sexually active, that is a gross misrepresentation of our programs. An Applied Research Center evaluation report showed that 25% of sexually active youth chose abstinence immediately following the program. Even more significant is that six months later, 50% of previously sexually active students indicated they made a decision to abstain from sex until marriage! Evaluations of three programs in Ohio are featured in a publication by the National Abstinence Education Association called Abstinence Works 2009. This report shows programs that are effective in reducing teen sex along with programs that show promising results from US Department of Health and Human Services Abstinence Education Evaluation Conferences. Abstinence until marriage education is working in Ohio and has the statistics to prove it.

I would ask this committee to carefully think about the outcomes we want to encourage for our children. This is a battle between two very different ideologies. Planned Parenthood and Family Planning groups operate on the premise that children cannot control their sexual urges and therefore need contraception. Abstinence education groups operate on the premise that our children can control their sexual urges and their urges to participate in other risky behaviors. We believe our children deserve healthy futures with healthy future families.

By providing condoms and contraceptive education, teen sexual activity is actually encouraged. When will our great state of Ohio return to its greatness by wanting the best environment for our children to grow and flourish and be able to raise healthy families and when will we stop hurting our children?

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Wood, Sunbury, Ohio