

Testimony in opposition of House Bill 293 or
Ohio Prevention First Act
House Health Committee
Representative Barbara Boyd, Chair

December 2, 2009

In contemplating what is truly best for young people, it is imperative that those the electorate has entrusted with the power to decide exercise extreme due diligence in weighing all the evidence. As a parent, advocate for youth, and an Ohio voter I am deeply concerned about the lives of our young people today and for their futures. In dealing with mandated sexual health education for all Ohio students, H.B. 293 also known as Ohio Prevention First Act will force upon our youth lasting negative consequences.

Prevention is defined at ‘to keep from happening or exiting’. Why then is there a consideration to mandate comprehensive sexual health curriculum that will emphasize contraception use as **STI prevention**?

The CDC website states that the most reliable ways to avoid becoming infected with or transmitting STDs are: to abstain from sexual intercourse (i.e., oral, vaginal, or anal sex); and be in a long-term, mutually monogamous relationship with an uninfected partner.

Communities, educators, and parents want, and should have a say in what type of sexual health education young adults receive. **The Zogby poll** revealed that the vast majority of parent’s support the emphasis on abstinence for teens should be equal to or greater than the emphasis placed on contraception.

In May 2007 **The Administration for Children and Families** released a review of comprehensive sex education curricula. Nine widely used comprehensive sex education curriculums were assessed.

- All nine curriculums were school based and comprehensive.
- All nine focus on contraception and ways to lessen risks of sexual activity that solely discuss
 - How to obtain protective devices
 - How to broach a discussion on introducing these devices in a relationship
 - How to correctly use the devices
- **Of the curricula reviewed the curriculum with the most balanced discussion of abstinence and safer-sex still discussed condoms and contraception nearly seven times more than abstinence.**

This is not what parents want their children to be immersed in when it comes to their sexual health. Emerging Answers 2007 a report generated by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy states:

- Nearly all teenagers experience pressure to have sex at some time or other.
- Research has indicated more than 500 risk and protective factors influence teens' sexual behavior.
- Risk factors increase the likelihood of pregnancy or STD; protective factors decrease the likelihood


What will condom education do to stem the tide of sexual pressure? Are contraceptives the one solution to answer to the over 500 risk factors? When studied, it is discovered that abstinence –centered curriculum, gives young people tools to choose and maintain healthy relationships, set goals, and thoughtfully consider the long-term impact sexual decisions will have on their health and emotional well-being. It provides protective factors. Ask yourself would you rather your son or daughter be equipped with the skills to say 'no' to sexual pressure, or be able to list the 10 steps of correctly using a condom? It's time abstinence-centered educators are seen as part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

In assessing where responsibility for success or failure of programming lies it is necessary to look at the levels of funding. Wouldn't it seem logical that the organizations getting the most dollars have both the bragging rights for success and the burden of responsibility for failure? That being the case, a Heritage Foundation study shows that for every dollar the government spends on abstinence programs it spends around \$4.50 for family planning, safe sex and contraceptive promotion for teens. If you include contraceptive promotion and family planning services for all age groups, Heritage figures the government spends \$12 to promote contraception for every dollar spent to encourage abstinence.

A recent report from the Secretary of Health and Human Services to the House of Representatives said that in fiscal year 2008, "the Department estimates that the HHS federal funding levels for programs addressing sexual activity among adolescents was \$785.8 million, of which \$176.5 million was spent for abstinence education."

I respectfully urge you to give parents the power to make their own decisions on what should and should not be taught to their children.

Respectfully submitted,


Diane Wise
Hudson, Ohio