

Chairwoman Boyd and Persons of the Committee,

My name is KD Miller and I am in support of the Ohio Prevention First Act. Whenever the topic of comprehensive sex education comes up, often times people hear facts of the latest growing teen pregnancy rates or the figures on how many STDs are being contracted annually by our youth; however, these numbers actually play into the day-to-day life of Ohioans.

In Hardin County, like many other parts of Ohio, we teach abstinence only education. The curriculum focuses only a small amount on sexually transmitted diseases, devoting the rest of the time explaining how abstinence is the only means to prevent them.

While I think teaching abstinence as a valid and 100 percent reliable way for Ohioans to avoid pregnancy and STDs, I also believe that we need to teach our children accurate information about contraceptives, the reasons for using them, the results, the benefits and the disadvantages.

While I was discussing sex education with my hometown high school health teacher, she stated “contraceptives do not prevent STDs” by contraceptives she meant specifically birth control and condoms. I remember in high school being taught that same misinformation, which I now know is medically inaccurate as condoms to prevent the transmission of STDs. Our children, students and teens are not only having information withheld from them but they are also being misinformed about scientific facts.

Within the same conversation with my former teacher also stated that gonorrhea and chlamydia in Hardin County high school students is still a major problem. If this is the case, how are we helping young Ohioans by giving them inaccurate information? When studies were preformed researching the accuracy of federally funded abstinence-only sex education it was found curricula supported by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services contained false information 80% of the time about the effectiveness of contraceptives, false information about abortion risks, religious beliefs presented as scientific fact , and/or medical and scientific errors.[1] The Ohio Prevention First Act would require

schools to provide medically accurate information about both abstinence and contraceptives leaving no room for hidden facts and inaccuracies.

Even more of a problem than STDs in Hardin County and Ohio is the teen and young adult pregnancy rates. I take this problem very seriously. There have been studies done to show the connections between teen pregnancy and poverty, teen pregnancy and depression as well as teen pregnancy and overall quality of life; many people have heard these numbers but what do they really mean?

My family is a very large family, between my mother and my father; I have 30 aunts and uncles resulting in 31 first cousins. Most of my family lives in the Hardin County region, with a few exceptions, and all but three of these family members live in the state of Ohio. As of right now, 61 percent of my cousins on my fathers side and 15 percent of my cousins on my mother's side have had or will be having children before the age of 21. That makes 42 percent (13 total) of my 31 cousins parents before the age of 21, only two of whom were married.

When I was talking to my grandmother about this act and what it would do for sex education in our schools, I mentioned that studies have shown abstinence only education does not work. My grandmother replied, "Well, you don't have to tell me that with all the great-grandchildren that I have. I think I know." As stated previously, my family all lives in the same general area. My cousins and I were all taught abstinence only education and these are the results.

In education, teacher candidates like me are being taught to use evidence-based research when teaching students. We are supposed to use methods that have been proven to work for the goal that we have set for our students. In sex education the overall goal is to reduce teen pregnancy and reduce teen STD rates. Comprehensive sex education has been shown to delay the time of first having sex as well it has been shown to reduce the frequency of sex, the number of new partners, and the rate of

unprotected sex among those that are sexually active. Studies have also shown that comprehensive sex education lowers STI and/or pregnancy rates. [2,3,4,5]

In the next 15 years I am going to have 21 baby cousins and one little sister that are all growing up in a community that teaches abstinence only and misinformation about STDs and teen pregnancy. This cycle of teen pregnancy that I am seeing in my family, in my community and in Ohio is going to continue unless we change our approach.

Our teens are having sex, that's a fact, one that's hard for some to hear. Regardless of whether our teens should be, it is our job to protect them: It has been proven that abstinence only education is not effective in lowering teen pregnancy and STD rates. So why are we trying the same ineffective methods? Let's take a stance for once that we are here to do what is best for the teens of Ohio by supporting the Ohio Prevention First Act.

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2. Kirby D. *Emerging Answers: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy*. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2001.
3. Kirby D et al. *Impact of Sex and HIV Education Programs on Sexual Behaviors of Youth in Developing and Developed Countries*. [Youth Research Working Paper, No. 2] Research Triangle Park, NC: Family Health International, 2005.
4. Alford S. *Science and Success: Sex Education and Other Programs that Work to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, HIV & Sexually Transmitted Infections*. Washington, DC: Advocates for Youth, 2003.
5. Alford S. *Science and Success, Second Edition: Programs that Work to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, HIV & Sexually Transmitted Infections*. Washington, DC: Advocates for Youth, 2008.