

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1178

As Reported by House Committee On:
Health Care

Title: An act relating to medically accurate information in sex education courses.

Brief Description: Requiring medically accurate information in sex education courses.

Sponsors: Representatives Schual-Berke, Skinner, Cody, Hankins, Moeller, Chase, Darneille, Upthegrove, Hunt, McCoy, Grant, Cooper, Clibborn, Ruderman, Kenney, Wallace, Lantz, Hudgins, Pettigrew, Morrell, McDermott, Jarrett, Romero, Haigh, Hunter, Kagi, Conway and Simpson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care: 1/30/03, 2/13/03 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires all educational programs that discuss sexual anatomy, sexual physiology, and reproductive health with public funds to: (1) provide medically accurate information; (2) teach that abstinence is the most effective way to prevent unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and AIDS; and (3) be age appropriate.
- Defines "medically accurate" as information supported by scientific research and published in peer-reviewed journals, where possible, and recognized as accurate and objective by expert professional organizations and government agencies.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Cody, Chair; Morrell, Vice Chair; Campbell, Clibborn, Darneille, Edwards, Moeller and Schual-Berke.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Pflug, Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Benson and Skinner.

Staff: Chris Blake (786-7392).

Background:

All public school curricula must teach the minimum requisites for good health, including methods to prevent exposure to and transmission of sexually transmitted diseases. The Washington Administrative Code, however, allows local school boards to decide whether or not to have sex education or human sexuality courses in their districts. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 permits the use of federal funds to provide sex education or HIV prevention education in schools as long as the instruction is age appropriate and the health benefits of abstinence are part of the curriculum.

Applicants to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program must receive family planning information including alternatives to abortion and other available local teen pregnancy prevention programs.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

All educational programs that discuss sexual anatomy, sexual physiology, and reproductive health that are supported with public funds must provide medically accurate information. The classes must also teach that abstinence from sexual intercourse is the most effective way to prevent an unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and sexually transmitted AIDS. Programs that provide statistics regarding the success and failure rates of different contraceptive devices in preventing pregnancy, AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases must use medically accurate statistics. Course materials and instruction must be age appropriate.

The term "medically accurate" is defined as information that is: (1) supported by research conducted in accordance with scientific methods and published in peer-reviewed journals, where appropriate; and (2) recognized as accurate and objective by expert professional organizations and government agencies such as the American College of Obstetricians, the Department of Health, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

School districts maintain the right to select their curriculum as long as it is medically accurate.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill requires that specific topics, instead of entire sexuality education courses, be taught with medically accurate information including sexual anatomy, sexual physiology, and reproductive health.

The substitute bill requires that statistics regarding the success and failure rates of contraceptives be medically accurate.

The substitute bill declares that school districts still have the authority to select their curriculum.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Students need medically and scientifically accurate information to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases and to make good decisions.

Testimony Against: The bill mandates comprehensive sex education and precludes abstinence education. There is seldom consensus on what is medically and scientifically accurate.

Testified: (In support) Laurie Jenkins, Department of Health; Lindsey Scola and Dana Little, University of Washington students; Molly Skinner Dag, The Evergreen State College student; and Judith Billings, Life Long AIDS.

(Opposed) Kathy Taylor, Life Choices SHARE Program; Dr. Sharon Quick; and LeAnna Binn, Teen-Aid, Inc.