

Jenna Wojdacz
HB 90 Opponent Testimony
House Health Committee

Good morning, Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd, esteemed members of the Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee. My name is Jenna Wojdacz and I am a Community Education Manager with Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio and the Ohio Center for Sex Education. I am also a life-long Ohioan, a parent, and a voter. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to you today in strong, frankly incredulous, opposition to HB90. This proposed bill would result in vague, expensive mandates that do not reflect what the majority of Ohioans want, would curtail the important and effective prevention work done by my colleagues and myself (as well as many others) every day, and would increase the dangerous messages of shame and stigma surrounding sexual health.

For nearly 20 years, I have been a comprehensive sex educator and have had the great privilege of directly serving tens of thousands of middle school and high school students in Central Ohio. I believe that we, the adults, are obligated to provide the very best information to young people as they grow and learn to navigate their way. Scientifically accurate, evidenced based, age appropriate, accessible, inclusive of all genders, races, and learning abilities. We meet people where they are, with humility and the very best information we can provide. I am here to tell you that unless you are doing this work, you really cannot clearly understand how confusing it can be for a young person to navigate the digital world in which almost all of them are submerged, particularly when it comes to messages about sex and sexual health. We stand as an antidote to misinformation, selective messaging, and shame-based language, which has been repeatedly proven to not only fail children personally but also result in increased negative outcomes from a public health perspective. People, in some ways, especially young people, know when you are obfuscating, know when you are not being straight or genuine with them. HB90 would result in the codification of that obfuscation, inserting values based information where only medically accurate information should be.

This bill would result in expensive requirements and obligations for our already over-burdened public health and school systems with no proof of any benefit. In fact, the effects of a recently passed similar law in Oklahoma has already begun to provide examples of the wasted money, time, and attention that HB90 would surely bring to Ohio.

Countless studies have proven that abstinence-only education does not result in what its proponents intend. It does not result in delay of first sex, and the areas of our country where abstinence-only education, which often comes with dangerous messages about gender stereotypes, exclusion of LGBT+ students, and misinformation about safe and available prevention methods are the areas where we see some of our highest unintended pregnancy rates. It is in these areas that we also find some of the most dismally high rates of sexually transmitted infections. HB90 would consign Ohio to the same fate. Every major, reputable medical association, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, The Society for Adolescent Medicine, The American Medical Association, and The American School Health Association support comprehensive sex education – the opposite of what HB90 would dictate.

As I wrap up my time before you, I want to ask, as an educator, a parent, an Ohioan, and just a human, please do not support this misguided bill, which we refer to as the Miseducation Bill. Because that is what it is. It would be a great disservice to the people of Ohio, it would cause harm, and it would get us

all further away from the goals we all share: to do whatever we can to promote health and happiness in our communities, so that people can learn, grow, and prosper with dignity and self-determination. Because anything less is less than we deserve. I implore you to make the right decision and vote no on HB90.

Thank you and I am happy to do my best to answer any questions you may have.