

Good afternoon, all, I hope your day has been well. I am Emelia Sherin, a senior public relations major at Kent State University, who has lived an experienced life at the age of 22. I am the current education intern for Weathervane Playhouse, Miss Akron Canton 2019, candidate #12 in the running for Miss Ohio, and the creator and co-writer for the New York Times accredited play, “(In)Dependent.” I aspire to give structure and transparency to health classes throughout the state of Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today, to discuss the importance behind developing a stable health education curriculum state wide under House Bill 165.

Growing up in a house of recovery, I was 12-stepped without even knowing it. I, myself, have suffered from drug abuse, which left me feeling hopeless. I used to numb the strong pain of my past of sexual assault and undiagnosed bipolar II disorder, until I gained the strength to reach out for proper help and hold myself accountable. Looking back on my experiences, I aspire to educate others on healthy coping mechanisms, the science behind addiction, and how to help their communities throughout the addiction epidemic. If I was taught the science behind drug use, proper coping mechanisms, or even become CPR and Narcan certified, I wouldn't have experienced a lot of the difficulties I have in my past. My Miss Akron Canton platform, “We Are Only Human,” focuses on addiction education and awareness because students transitioning into adulthood need to understand what's real, raw, and relevant.

Each district creating their own lesson plan for the health curriculum based off of a loose outline is a hindrance to the state of Ohio and its education system. Students need a solidified structure to be on the same page as a unified state, instead of a district. These children will not be innocent and hidden from reality forever. You were once a child. What would you have liked to learn in health class that would've helped you today?

Parents are calling and complaining to schools about the content, making teachers fear their own jobs. We need to take a more scientific approach to teaching health and utilize the arts to help explain it. In English, we learn how to read. In history, we learn about the past. In math, we learn to develop a solution through various equations. But in health class, where we are introduced to the biggest mystery on the planet; our own body, we don't have a unified approach to learning who we are, how we are and why we are. There are basic requirements that need to

be met and attained to achieve a high school diploma. But, there are no basics or understandings of how to take what we have learned in health class and apply this to our own being. Telling kids don't drink and don't do drugs is not an effective lesson plan, never has been and never will be.

By starting the conversation, communities can end the stigma surrounding addiction while reducing ignorance and fear in the education system. In 2017, for lack of a structured educational platform and to help spread awareness, I created and co-wrote a play called, *(In)Dependent*. The play follows the paths of two people who are recovering and continuously facing their personified demon, heroin. Every character and scene is based on 50 interviews of people currently using or in recovery, family of users, doctors, judges, nurses, and EMTs. Wherever the play is performed, all proceeds and collected items are donated to a local rehabilitation center. This was my way of combining the arts and sciences to create a form of education that was easily understood by people of all ages, especially high schoolers. It's important to have the attention and connection of the students; it's how we get to the roots of educational progress.

For example, I'm a 2015 graduate of Howland High School in Warren, OH. During my time at Howland High School, our health classes did not properly teach us about addiction awareness, recovery or who we could even talk to about these types of issues. In 2017, after losing several graduates from the addiction epidemic over the years, instead of sitting in silence and reading another obituary, Howland decided to create an annual symposium that focuses on discussing addiction education, providing resources to students who were in need. This type of action has helped many in the District, but there are so many more throughout the State that could benefit from it. Unfortunately, this topic is too edgy and does not sit comfortably with the idea that our youth's innocence will be lost forever if they are exposed to this subject matter or sex education or domestic abuse or any other one of life's problems that they may face once they graduate.

By providing a State standard curriculum, these types of real life problems can be addressed in an appropriate manner and in a safe space by a trusted educator. The time of teaching life lessons, as long as they are not controversial, has to end. If only I knew then what I

know now, my life might have been a little better. Please help our kid's lives to be a little better, thanks to Representative Liston and Galonksi. Thank you.