



## **Senator Vernon Sykes Senate District 28**

### Committees:

- Education – Ranking Member
- Finance
- Health and Human Services
- Public Utilities
- Local Government, Public Safety & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee:
- Finance: Primary & Secondary Education – Vice Chair

Good afternoon Chairwoman Lehner, Vice-Chair Huffman, and members of the Education committee. Thank you for the opportunity to give sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 287, which requires the State Board of Education to create health education standards for K-12 schools.

According to the Health Policy Institute of Ohio, Ohio ranks 43 out of 50 states on a composite measure of population health.<sup>i</sup> Ohio ranked second in opioid overdose deaths in 2016.<sup>ii</sup>

Health education curricula and instruction are critical to helping students learn the skills necessary to make healthy choices throughout their lifetime. High health literacy is linked to better lifelong health outcomes while low health literacy is associated with poor health outcomes and inadequate use of health care services. Effective curricula lowers student risk of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, while improving injury and disease prevention, mental and emotional health, nutrition, and physical activity.

The lack of clear guidelines and standards contribute to poor health outcomes. Research has found that in Ohio about half of health education teachers use curriculum that is outdated and only about 30 percent of health education teachers say they receive professional development. Without the guidance from state standards, health education is often a forgotten content area leading to an outdated and ineffective curriculum. The adoption of health education standards developed by the state board would be permissible, leaving the decision up to local school districts whether to use them. Ohio is the only state without health education standards and health education is the only academic content area without standards.

Developing standards will provide clarity and guidance which will create better health education for students. The intent of this legislation is to provide local schools with a framework to develop curricula that ensure students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Although health education standards do not determine content or subject matter, current law and this bill would require any proposed change in venereal disease and abstinence curriculum be approved by a concurrent resolution of the General Assembly. Thus, this legislation does not address sexual education without further action by this body, as under current law.

By not having health education standards, Ohio is missing an easy opportunity to improve the health of its citizens. Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 287. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

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<sup>i</sup> [http://www.healthpolicyohio.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/2017Dashboard\\_Snapshot.pdf](http://www.healthpolicyohio.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/2017Dashboard_Snapshot.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/statedeaths.html>