

Jennifer McNally
House Bill 90 – The Miseducation and Misinformation Bill
Opponent Testimony
Ohio House Health Committee
June 4, 2019

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd, and Members of the House Health Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide testimony.

My name is Jennifer McNally and I chair the Board of Trustees of Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio. I am a proud parent to a son who is in the 8th grade at Bexley Middle School and a 6th grader at Columbus School for Girls. I am also a constituent who is here to voice concern and opposition to House Bill 90.

In Ohio, four out of 10 high school students are sexually active, and half of all new sexually transmitted infections, or STIs, occur in adolescents. It is essential that school educators deliver an evidence-based curriculum that educates and empowers adolescents to make informed decisions for their futures.

Like many parents in Ohio, I assumed that my school district was providing a fact-based curriculum. In 2017, I was shocked to learn that Bexley Middle School's sexual-health program was presented by a faith-based organization that lacks any sort of medical or scientific credibility. They were presenting students with misleading, biased, and wholly inaccurate information.

This particular program had been offered at Bexley Middle School since 2011. The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services has 41 approved evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programs, and the program being used by Bexley Middle School was not on that list.

After speaking with parents, medical and educational professionals, and community leaders—all of whom shared my horror that this blatantly biased group had access to our children, I developed a committee of experts to help school administrators understand that a comprehensive, fact-based sexual-health curriculum better reflects the needs and values of our community.

A recent issue of the Journal of Adolescent Health reported that a new study argues that abstinence-only-until-marriage programs, like the one being used at Bexley Middle School, are ineffective and unethical.

Ohio is the only state in the nation without health education standards. House Bill 90 attempts to move the needle in creating standards in Ohio—standards that are blatantly inaccurate and ideologically motivated. This legislation will ultimately fail to equip our children with the knowledge and tools needed to make informed health and medical decisions that could affect their futures.

Evidence-based programs have been proven—through rigorous research—to not only improve knowledge and attitudes, but to delay sexual activity and change behaviors that prevent unintended pregnancy and exposure to STIs.

Fortunately, Bexley Middle School immediately terminated the faith-based program. With the help of our committee, school administrators carefully considered implementing a comprehensive, medically accurate program. I am pleased to say that the new fact-based program will begin in the next academic year.

With that said, this was an involved process that took deep commitment and time from both parents and school administrators. This is not a feasible reality for the majority of school districts in Ohio. State legislators, like those who sit on this committee, need to listen to trained educators and medical professionals who are the experts in this field and the parents who are responsible for the well-being of their children rather than wasting resources creating programming is dangerous for Ohio's young people.

Our children deserve an inclusive, developmentally appropriate, and honest education. We have a societal responsibility to help them learn to protect themselves, to navigate healthy relationships, and to reinforce family communications. Offering anything less is not only ineffective, it is unethical.

I strongly urge you to vote NO on House Bill 90, the harmful miseducation and misinformation bill.

Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony. I am happy to answer your questions.

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