

Testimony Opposing Senate Bill 121
Tuesday, October 29, 2019

To: Chairperson Lehner, and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

Teresa Fedor, Andrew Brenner, William Coley, Theresa Gavarone, Matt Huffman, Stephen Huffman, Tina Maharath, Nathan Maharath, Nathan Manning and Vernon Sykes.

From: Catherine Wood, Relationships Under Construction, Columbus, Ohio

My name is Catherine Wood. I am the President of Relationships Under Construction (RUC) which provides risk avoidance education programs to over 25,000 students in public and private schools each year, and RUC is also the fiscal agent for the Ohio Adolescent Health Centers (OAHC) which is a collaborative of 10 like organizations who provide educational programs to another 70,000+ students annually. Our educational programs are medically accurate, theoretically sound and consistent with public health models and state and federal law while providing risk avoidance education for middle school and high school students. We encourage students to avoid unhealthy, risky behaviors including sexual activity outside of marriage, sexually transmitted diseases, drugs, alcohol, vaping, dating violence, bullying, gambling, pornography and human trafficking. Relationships Under Construction encourages optimal health and healthy relationships for all youth affording them the opportunity to reach their full potential as adults.

Dear Members of the Education Committee, I am very concerned about Senate Bill 121. This bill is not necessary and could do great harm to our students by not allowing them access to the truth. The Current Health Standards Law ORC 3301.0718A says *“the state board of education shall not adopt or revise any standards or curriculum in the area of health unless, by concurrent resolution, the standards, curriculum, or revisions are approved by both houses of the general assembly.”* The law already allows health standards to be created, just with legislative and public approval. Both ORC 3313.60 which covers the health education requirement and 3313.6011 which covers instruction in venereal disease to emphasize abstinence or risk avoidance to risky sexual practices are enough. Again, these laws do not prevent the development of state standards for health education. It only requires legislative oversight for these highly sensitive instruction objectives. Please do not give up your oversight of our precious children in this area. Our current laws also still allow for decisions to be made at the local level. Please do not take away the right for local families to make wise individual choices for their children.