November 29, 2019

Dear Members of the Education Committee,

Thank you for taking the time to read my written testimony to support S.B. No. 121. My name is Tina Dake and I have been teaching for 20 years as a health and physical education teacher in Toledo, Ohio at Whitmer High School. It was important for me to write this testimony so you have an inside look at the positive impact passing S.B. No. 121 would have on students and for me as a health educator. Having Ohio Health Standards would provide credibility to the health education profession, provide professional development opportunities to ensure quality health education in Ohio, and allow consistency of skill development for students in Ohio to create a strong foundation for healthy behaviors. All these advantages would lead to positive outcomes for students in Ohio.

I would like to speak from the heart. I started my advocacy journey to have Ohio Health Standards as a young professional in 1999 and still have the same passion today in 2019. My love for the profession and positive impact I see in my students fuels me each day I walk into the classroom. Here are some examples of the positive health behaviors I have helped to foster through the skills taught in my daily lessons:

* Students have stopped smoking and vaping after learning about the dangers associated with these habits;
* students have found healthy recipes and made them for their family after learning how to access credible resources;
* students felt confident talking at their job interview because of the communication skills we practiced in class;
* students had the opportunity to practice healthy decision-making skills through a variety of scenarios that included situations they may face;
* students were able to talk to a trusted adult after learning about the warning signs of suicidal ideation;
* students practiced exercise routines and found that it helps combat depression along with several other physical, social, and mental/emotional benefits; and
* students had the opportunity to achieve their personal health goals from weekly checks on their progress and support to help overcome any barriers they faced.

These are just some of the examples of the skills we practice in the classroom to keep students safe, increase confidence, and build the foundation for a healthy lifestyle.

The students I teach face many tough challenges and the content and skills they learn in my health education classroom empowers them to face those challenges. The National Health Education Standards have helped me to provide a framework for my curriculum so I can maximize the time I have with my students. I was made aware of the importance of the National Health Education Standards and how to implement them in my curriculum because of the additional training I pursued as a health educator. Having state health education standards would allow for professional development opportunities so all health educators in Ohio are aware of the vital role of health standards and how to put them into practice for their health curriculum needs.

Health education standards are not topic focused and allow me to utilize them in any content area within my health education curriculum. When I start a unit, I first decide the skills that would be essential for my students to practice for this topic area. For example, in the drug unit, one of the skills I would include is practicing interpersonal communication skills. I would have my students practice effective communication skills to avoid taking others’ prescription medication. After deciding on the skills for a unit, I then focus on the functional knowledge that would help my students in achieving those skills. To continue with the drug unit example, I would make sure the students had the knowledge about the dangers associated with taking another person’s prescription medication.

Health education standards would ensure that every skill is covered throughout the curriculum in different content areas. These standards are made to help guide teachers and provide a framework to best utilize the time with students in health education and focus on information that will increase the likelihood of students practicing healthy behaviors throughout their lifetime.

The adoption of health education standards would also support quality health education throughout Ohio. There is so much health information from so many different platforms that standards would help to organize it into essential knowledge and skills for healthy growth and development of the child. There are also different needs in different areas of our state, that health education standards would help to align the content and skills that are a high priority for that school district.

We all want the best for our children. That is why we are having these important conversations. As a parent of 2 teenage boys, I also know the challenges of raising children in such a demanding environment. The challenges our children face will always be changing as our culture is always changing. I am not the same teacher I was even 5 years ago. My students are growing up in a culture where the information they receive from their cell phone changes their emotional state from one class hour to the next based on what was said on social media. Throughout all this change, the health education standards have kept up. State Health Education Standards would provide a general framework to help health educators focus on the primary needs of our students. This would also offer the opportunity of professional development for health educators in Ohio so they can keep up on current trends in children’s health behavior.

Having state health education standards would bring credibility to what I do each day as a health educator. State health education standards would provide resources to the administrators in my school district, so they have a better understanding of health education. Our society continues to face serious health concerns, and it is disrupting the educational focus of our students. We want our students to do well in school, but some students get suspended because they could not control their emotions and got into a fight; or they slept through class because they stayed up too late on social media. Health education supports the educational goals of Ohio’s school districts.

Please pass S.B No. 121 and adopt state health education standards. You will be supporting the work I do as a health educator so I can help to prepare our students for the demands our society places upon them. You will see the positive outcome of adopting state health education standards throughout Ohio because of this decision. Thank you for taking the time to read my written testimony.