



Senator Vernon Sykes
Senate District 28

Senator Stephanie Kunze
Senate District 16

Good afternoon Chairwoman Lehner, Vice-Chair Terhar, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Senate Education committee. Thank you for the opportunity to give sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 121, which requires the State Board of Education to create health education standards for K-12 schools.

Ohio is the only state in the nation without health education standards, and health education is our only subject area without standards. According to the Health Policy Institute of Ohio, Ohio ranks 46 out of 50 states on a composite measure of population health,ⁱ and according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Ohio ranked second in opioid overdose deaths in 2017.ⁱⁱ

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 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 current lack of clear guidelines and standards contribute to Ohio's poor health outcomes. Without guidance from state standards, health education is often a forgotten content area leading to an outdated and ineffective curriculum. 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. The adoption of health education standards developed by the state board would be permissive, leaving the decision up to local school districts whether or not to use them.

Although health education standards do not determine content or subject matter, current law, and this bill would require any proposed change to venereal disease and abstinence curriculum be approved by a concurrent resolution of the General Assembly. Thus, the currently codified procedure for implementing sexual education will remain in place.

By not having health education standards, Ohio is missing an opportunity to improve the health of its citizens. Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 121. We are happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

ⁱ https://www.healthpolicyohio.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/2017Dashboard_Snapshot.pdf

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