

As a concerned Rhode Island constituent, I'm writing in opposition of H5837 regarding changes to education curriculum policies.

I spent my teen years in Massachusetts, where my high school's health and PE classes were cut after my first year for budgetary issues. The closest thing I had to sex education beyond uterus diagrams and warnings of predatory dating was my teacher slipping a condom on a banana in the literal last five minutes of our last ever class. I have never felt so ill-prepared in the most basic human functions. Now in my thirties, I'm still learning truths about my body that would have served me best long over a decade ago. I don't consider myself a sexual person, but even I can recognize the importance of this information. It may be awkward and uncomfortable at times, but this knowledge is a necessity in navigating the world, regardless of when you'll actually put said knowledge to use or if it even affects you directly.

When I was in middle school, my mom's idea of teaching me about puberty was giving me a copy of *The Care and Keeping of You*, hoping I'd read it and maybe ask questions. (Spoiler alert: I only looked at the pictures before going back to my fun tween books. Imagine my horror when I first got my period and had no idea why I was bleeding.) I love my mother, she is one of the most important people in my life, but unfortunately I've learned that parents don't always have the best teaching methods.

Beyond the topics of sex ed, H5837 opening the door to parent-revised curricula would set a dangerous precedent. As we've already seen with book challenges and bans across the state, LGBTQ+ and BIPOC-inclusive content often face the most objection, completely alienating and discretely attacking subsections of our population for individuals' discriminatory beliefs. Parents have rights, but not over other people's kids. Changing consent for curriculum to move forward to unanimous opt-in means a few people can control what other kids learn, additionally negating the hard work and time teachers put into developing their coursework. Teachers are professionals who studied to get where they are and deserve the trust that they know what they're doing. Students equally deserve the trust that they can handle difficult topics.

I ask you please reconsider these changes and vote no on H5837. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Alex Gaudins, Wakefield, RI, 02879