

Dear Honorable Members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Alina Watson, and I am writing to express my **strong opposition to H5837**, which requires parental consent on the content of and participation in sex education. I volunteer teaching weekly sex education classes in Providence high schools and am deeply concerned that this bill will limit access to students who may benefit most from this instruction.

Requiring parental consent creates an unnecessary gatekeeping mechanism that will disproportionately impact students in unsupportive or uninformed households. I've worked with students who have said things like, "I've never heard this before" or "This is the first time someone's explained this to me." When sex education is only available to students whose parents explicitly approve it, we risk reinforcing disparities—leaving students without access to accurate information about consent, healthy relationships, and their own bodies.

Passing this bill would effectively silence and endanger many young people who already face barriers to care and education. Instead of empowering families, it will create more fear, stigma, and shame around critical conversations about sex, relationships, and identity. Opt-out policies already give parents the ability to remove their child from instruction—but an opt-in approach will cut off access entirely for students who may not have a voice at home. I urge you to oppose this bill and protect students' right to essential, life-saving education.

Thank you for your consideration,

Alina Watson
Sexual Health Advocacy through Peer Education