

Name: Kayla Poholek

Bill Number: 5604

Viewpoint (for/against/neither): For

Testimony:

To whom it may concern,

My name is Kayla Poholek and I am currently a senior at The Greene School, a Rhode Island Public charter school. I am writing to you to present information in favor of the passing of Bill 5604 which is related to health and family life courses in Rhode Island public schools in grades six through twelve.

Research has shown that students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, non-gender binary, or transgender (LGBTQ) experience higher rates of bullying, sexual assault, and other traumas. These student populations also experience higher rates of depression, pregnancy, suicidal ideation, and anxiety which leads many of these young people to drop out or be chronically absent from school. By providing Rhode Island's youth with inclusive and comprehensive sexual education, bias against the LGBTQ populations of schools can be drastically reduced.

In my personal experience with health and family life courses in the Rhode Island Public schools, I have found it to be incredibly inadequate and in many cases non-existent. It was not until the twelfth grade that I was provided with any sort of sexual education in regards to STI's, contraceptives, sexuality or gender identity. When I finally received education on these topics, I was provided with medically inaccurate information on numerous occasions and a largely heteronormative viewpoint on sexuality.

This experience of misinformation and lack of inclusivity is something that many of my peers across the state are being faced with and it needs to be addressed. By passing bill 5604, sexual education can become more comprehensive and inclusive in order to set Rhode Island's youth up for future success and provide them with all the information they need to have safe, and healthy relationships in the future. Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with my viewpoint, have a lovely day.

Warm Regards,
Kayla Poholek
She/her