



Planned Parenthood of Southern New England

Testimony in SUPPORT of H 5604 (Rep. Kislak)
Craig O'Connor, Rhode Island Director for Policy and Government Relations
Planned Parenthood of Southern New England
Rhode Island House Committee on Education, Wednesday, March 3, 2021

Chairman McNamara and members of the House Committee on Education,

Thank you for the opportunity to highlight Planned Parenthood of Southern New England's **support for H 5064 (Rep. Kislak)** which would modernize Rhode Island's sexual education statutes.

PPSNE provides reproductive, primary and preventive care to over 10,000 Rhode Island patients each year. One of our education initiatives is called Students Teaching About Responsible Sexuality (STARS), a peer education program. The goal of STARS is to effectively impact the development of healthy sexuality among youth by promoting healthy relationships through responsible choices. Teens are trained to respond to basic questions from their peers on sexuality-related topics and to know when and how to skillfully make referrals. In addition, students facilitate workshops at a number of conferences for their peers and advise PPSNE on matters relevant to teens.

It is crucial that Rhode Island health education curriculum include positive and supportive material for all students, however they identify and with respect for their decisions on becoming sexually active. The current Rhode Island Health Education Framework (www.thriveri.org/documents/RI_HE_Framework.pdf) contains no references to the LGBTQ+ community. Another foundational document, RIDE's Comprehensive Health Instructional Outcomes guidance does include goals that are supportive of LGBT+ identifying youth, though only 3 in a document that is 53 pages long (http://thriveri.org/documents/RI_CHI_Outcomes.pdf).

Planned Parenthood of Southern New England would like to thank Rep. Kislak for introducing this important legislation. We urge the Committee to pass H 5604 and to recommend the full House of Representatives to do so as well.

Respectfully,

Craig R. O'Connor | Director of Public Policy and Government Relations, Rhode Island
Planned Parenthood of Southern New England
175 Broad Street, Providence RI 02903
(401) 793-0005 mobile