

March 26, 2024

Members of the House Education Finance Committee
Via Electronic Delivery



Minnesota Youth

Activist Alliance

a project of Advocates for Youth

Re: Letter in Support of House File 3682

Chair Youakim and Members of the House Education Finance Committee:

The Minnesota Youth Activist Alliance submits this letter to express our support for House File 3682. We are writing on behalf of Advocates for Youth, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that partners with youth leaders, adult allies, and youth-serving organizations to advocate for policies and champion programs that recognize young people's rights to honest sexual health information; accessible, confidential, and affordable sexual health services; and the resources and opportunities necessary to create sexual health equity for all youth. The Minnesota Youth Activist Alliance is a project of Advocates for Youth, led by young people between the ages of 14 and 24 committed to the fight for reproductive freedoms in Minnesota.

House File 3682 would designate the commissioner of education to begin the rulemaking process to adopt statewide academic standards in health. The establishment of such standards would take actionable steps toward ensuring that all Minnesotans are equipped with the knowledge and skills to attain their highest level of health. Furthermore, these standards aim to center the wellbeing of young people and provide the necessary tools for them to exercise their bodily autonomy and make informed decisions regarding their health and well-being.

Young people are at risk of continued health hazards such as disease, psychological stressors, substance misuse, violence, and more without these standards. In addition, health disparities persist among youth who are LGBTQ+ and/or from communities of color. As LGBTQ youth ourselves, we know first hand that when queer and transgender students don't have access to inclusive education, it can be damaging for their mental health. We learned that from our conversations with peers, many of us had to seek out health information and support from other places because it was not taught to us in school. It is clear that the current lack of health standards in Minnesota has affected how we lead our lives today. But we have the opportunity to change this - the development of these standards through House File 3682 will create a state where young Minnesotans can live freely and safely.

As a youth-and-student-led organization, we understand that establishing statewide health standards will empower the youth of Minnesota to lead safer and healthier lives and have long-term benefits in communities across the state. The Minnesota Youth Activist Alliance respectfully requests your support for House File 3682.

In Community,
Tori Westenberg
Yamalí Rodas Figueroa
Lead Organizers, Minnesota Youth Activist Alliance