



March 1, 2019

The Honorable Representative Cheryl Youakim and
Members of the House Education Policy Committee
591 State Office Building,
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Representative Youakim and Committee Members,

I am writing to urge you and the members of the House Education Policy Committee to support Rep. Lippert's HF1414, Comprehensive Sex Education.

JustUs Health combines the full range of prevention, education, advocacy, and support services for people at risk of or affected by HIV, developed by Minnesota AIDS Project, with the innovative research and education programs of Rainbow Health Initiative and Training to Serve. Together, we envision a Minnesota where people from diverse gender, sexual, and cultural communities experience health and wellness in powerfully inclusive environments.

We are failing Minnesota's youth by not providing them with the information, education, and skills they need to lead healthy lives. Students need access to responsible, medically accurate, age-appropriate sex education to equip them with the knowledge necessary to make the best choices about their sexual health and reduce rates of unplanned pregnancy, HIV, sexually transmitted infections and sexual violence. This type of education is free of stigma and shame and is inclusive of all young people regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, or ethnicity.

Describing cisgender and heterosexual identities and relationships as a 'default' in classrooms has a real impact on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) young people. Outright anti-LGBTQ rhetoric and language which reinforces the gender binary framework can have a severe psychological impact on people who identify as LGBTQ. Absence of LGBTQ-inclusivity can similarly promote stigma and harmful stereotypes. Unfortunately, when it comes to sex education in schools, LGBTQ-youth experience both of these scenarios.

According to statistics from the Minnesota Student Survey, LGBTQ students trail significantly behind their straight peers on many measures, especially related to mental health and physical health. LGBTQ students have disproportionately suffered from higher rates of suicide, depression, school bullying, and risky sexual behaviors.

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Formerly



Medically accurate, comprehensive sex education has been shown to improve academic success and prevent child sexual abuse, dating violence, and bullying. It encourages youth to develop healthy relationships; delay sexual initiation; reduce unintended pregnancy or transmission of HIV and other STIs; and reduce health disparities among LGBTQ youth. Continuing to support abstinence-based education is not only unrealistic but is actively harming youth who are not prepared to safely protect themselves from sexual violence, unplanned pregnancy, and HIV or STDs.

Thank you for your support for HF1414!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Fey". The signature is stylized and cursive.

David Fey
Interim Executive Director
JustUs Health