

May 18, 2021

The Honorable Barbara Lee  
2470 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cory Booker  
717 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Alma Adams  
2436 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mazie Hirono  
109 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Lee, Representative Adams, Senator Booker, and Senator Hirono:

As organizations committed to building a world where every young person has access to high quality, evidence-informed, medically accurate, and complete sex education that meets their needs, we write to you in support of the Real Education and Access for Healthy Youth Act (REAHYA). This bill would make needed investments in inclusive and honest sex education programs and create linkages to sexual health services for young people who face the greatest barriers to information and access to care.

For many of these young people, a lack of comprehensive in scope, confidential, equitable, and accessible sex education and sexual health services is not unfamiliar, but rather a longstanding manifestation of white supremacy, which has touched every aspect of our history, culture, and institutions, including the education and healthcare systems. We commend this legislation for its focus on reproductive justice and equity and believe that sexual health education that is comprehensive in scope is a crucial component of dismantling these systems of oppression.

We know there is a gap between the sexual health information that many young people receive--if any information at all--and what they need and deserve, based on expert standards. Twenty-nine states and the District of Columbia mandate sex education and 15 states do not require sex education or HIV/STI instruction to be age-appropriate, medically accurate, culturally responsive, or are evidence-based or evidence-informed.<sup>1</sup> In fact, nine states explicitly require instruction that discriminates against LGBTQ+ people.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Black young people are more likely to receive abstinence-only instruction.<sup>3</sup> Research shows that abstinence-only instruction, also known as “sexual risk avoidance” instruction, is ineffective in comparison to sex education.

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<sup>1</sup> SIECUS (November 2020). <https://siecus.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/SIECUS-Sex-Ed-State-Law-and-Policy-Chart.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> SIECUS (November 2020). <https://siecus.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/SIECUS-Sex-Ed-State-Law-and-Policy-Chart.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Kuehnel, S. S. (2009). Abstinence-Only Education Fails African-American Youth, 86 WASH. U. L. REV. 1241. Retrieved from [https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1136&context=law\\_lawreview](https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1136&context=law_lawreview)

Our organizations strongly support this bill and the investments it makes to support high quality sexual health education and funding for linkages to clinical care that is confidential, culturally responsive, and meets the needs of all young people. Everyone--no matter who they are or where they live--deserves the information and care they need to achieve their goals and live their lives on their terms. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth  
AIDS Alabama  
AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families  
AIDS Foundation Chicago  
The AIDS Institute  
American Atheists  
American Humanist Association  
American Public Health Association  
American Sexual Health Association  
The American Society for Reproductive Medicine  
APLA Health  
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health  
Aunt Rita's Foundation  
Black AIDS Institute  
Cascade AIDS Project  
Catholics for Choice  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Center for Disability Rights  
Center for LGBTQ Economic Advancement & Research (CLEAR)  
Center for Reproductive Rights  
Colorado Organizations and Individuals Responding to HIV/AIDS (CORA)  
Desiree Alliance  
Equality California  
EyesOpenIowa  
Fact Forward  
Girls Inc.  
Girls Inc. NH  
Girls Inc. of Alameda County  
Girls Inc. of Bay County  
Girls Inc. of Carpinteria  
Girls Inc. of Chicago  
Girls Inc. of Greater Houston  
Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara  
Girls Inc. of Long Island  
Girls Inc. of Memphis  
Girls Inc. of Metro Denver

Girls Inc. of Orange County  
Girls Inc. of San Antonio  
Girls Inc. of the Island City  
Girls Inc. of the Valley  
Girls Inc. of Wayne County  
Girls Incorporated of Kingsport  
Girls Incorporated of Sioux City  
Girls Incorporated of Washington County MD  
Gladys Allen Brigham Community Center/Girls Inc. of the Berkshires  
Guttmacher Institute  
Health Connected  
Healthy Teen Network  
HIV + Hepatitis Policy Institute  
Human Rights Watch  
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda  
interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth  
International Association of Providers of AIDS Care  
Ipas  
Jewish Women International  
Lambda Legal  
Mazzoni Center  
Medical Students for Choice  
Michigan Organization on Adolescent Sexual Health (MOASH)  
Modern Military Association of America  
NARAL Pro-Choice America  
NASTAD  
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)  
National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network  
National Center for Transgender Equality  
National Coalition of STD Directors  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Equality Action Team (NEAT)  
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association  
National Health Law Program  
National Institute for Reproductive Health  
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund  
National Network of Abortion Funds  
National Organization for Women  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National Working Positive Coalition  
North Carolina AIDS Action Network  
one-n-ten  
People For the American Way  
PFLAG National

Physicians for Reproductive Health  
Planned Parenthood Federation of America  
Population Institute  
Positive Women's Network-USA  
Power to Decide  
Prevention Access Campaign  
Reframe Health and Justice  
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice  
Reproductive Health Access Project  
RISE: Healthy for Life  
SHAPE America  
SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change  
Silver State Equality-Nevada  
Southwest Center  
Teen Health Mississippi  
Treatment Action Group  
Union for Reform Judaism  
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity  
Whitman-Walker Institute  
Women of Reform Judaism  
WV FREE