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Responsible Sex Ed Targeted by State School Board
State House Urged to Protect Kansas Youth

Despite an outpouring of public opposition, the Kansas State Board of Education passed a new “opt-in” policy for sex education in public schools, which will leave many Kansas teens in the dark about how to protect themselves from unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Today’s vote and discussion of eliminating sex ed requirements altogether demonstrates the need for the House Federal and State Affairs Committee to put prevention before politics and pass SB 508, the Abstinence Plus Education Act.

“Parents should talk with their teens about sex and know what is being taught in sex ed, and we encourage them to do so,” said Peter Brownlie, CEO and President of Planned Parenthood of Kansas and Mid-Missouri. “Unfortunately, many parents won’t engage in these conversations, and in some cases these teens come from risky home environments. These are the teens that most need lifesaving, accurate information, and they are the teens most likely not to get it under this policy.”

Kansas’ health standards expired on July 1st. The previous standards required local school boards to develop an “opt-out” policy for sex education, by which parents or guardians can remove their children from any or all of these classes. The “opt-in” policy would require parents to approve each specific issue included in the sex ed curriculum.

In February, the Kansas Senate passed SB 508, the Abstinence Plus Education Act, which would codify the expired regulations that had been in place since 1987. The teen pregnancy rate in the state has decreased more than 20 percent during that time. The bill is currently sitting in the House Federal & State Affairs Committee, and Chairman John Edmonds has not yet scheduled a hearing for the bill.

“Today’s irresponsible actions by the State Board show the urgent need for the House to take immediate action on SB 508,” continued Brownlie. “While the legislature continues to hear and debate politically motivated bills targeting abortion providers, they’re ignoring medically accurate sex ed – the best way to prevent unintended pregnancies and abortions in the first place. Kansas’ teens and families will be the ones to suffer as a result.”

Brownlie concluded, “Polls show that the majority of Americans support comprehensive sex ed because parents recognize the reality that some teens are going to have sex, and parents want them to have the tools they need to make responsible decisions. I urge the Committee and the full House to act as responsibly and to stop playing politics with the lives of Kansas youth.”

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