
Planned Parenthood of New York City

**Planned Parenthood of New York City
Testimony on Anti-Violence and Anti-Bullying Measures
November 18, 2014**

Good afternoon. I am Julienne Verdi, Director of Government Relations at Planned Parenthood of New York City (PPNYC). I am pleased to be here today to provide testimony in support of Resolutions 9, 149, 455 and 456, calling on the New York State Legislature and New York City Department of Education to take measures to increase resources and education surrounding bullying and intimate partner violence. Planned Parenthood of New York City thanks our strong supporter and Chair of the New York City Council Committee on Education, the Honorable Council Member Daniel Dromm for his leadership in convening this hearing. We'd also like to thank Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, the Committee on Education and the entire City Council for their dedication to these issues and we welcome the opportunity to discuss ways we can improve education for all New York students.

As a sexual and reproductive health care provider, we see 50,000 patients annually in our four health centers located throughout New York City. Seventy-three percent of our clients are under the age of thirty and the majority of them are women. In addition to our clinical services, PPNYC has a robust education program, providing both youth and adult education programs. Our Education and Training Department provides education, training and outreach to more than 25,000 youth, adults and professionals annually. Our programs aim to deliver information and tools to help our participants lead sexually healthy, safe and responsible lives. Specifically, in 2013, we reached more than 16,800 youth between the ages of 11-21 through education and outreach programs in schools, after school programs and in community-based organizations. All of our educational curriculum we provide includes a healthy relationship component. One of our curricula in particular, titled All of Us, is designed as a holistic model of sexual health for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth. It is grounded in the idea that providing LGBT teens with sexual health information that is medically accurate and age appropriate, while also acknowledging genital diversity as well as the vast range of gender and sexual expressions, creates an affirming environment for LGBT youth identities and promotes healthy decision making in teens' sexual lives. Curriculum like All of Us recognizes the interconnections between bullying, sexual assault, and intimate partner violence and education regarding sexual health, condom negotiation, consent and healthy relationships. PPNYC also provides training for educators and other professionals through our Training Institute. In this capacity, we are finalizing a training on the topic of teen intimate partner violence tentatively scheduled for May 2015.

Our experience as a sexual health education and service provider shows us firsthand the gaps that remain in New York City's sexual health education, which has a significant impact on young people's health and well-being. As the largest metropolitan area in the United States, New York City has an opportunity to become a leader in comprehensive sexual education. Comprehensive sexual education includes education on anti-bullying and anti-intimate partner violence measures, and it must teach not just the basic prevention lessons, but also provide students the skills to build healthy relationships and caring communities, and empower students to make the best decisions that are right for them.

Research has demonstrated clear correlations between comprehensive sex education and improved confidence, healthier behaviors and even improved math and reading scores.¹ Comprehensive sexual

¹ Future of Sex Education, *National Sexuality Education Standards, Core Content and Skills K-12*, at page 7
<http://www.futureofsexed.org/documents/josh-fose-standards-web.pdf>

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education in every school, for every student K-12, could help decrease incidents of assault and abuse. Despite efforts to improve sexual education, many students are still not receiving instruction in school and what is being taught often does not include enough support around communication, healthy relationships, and support for LGBTQ students. These causes are interrelated—we must discuss what meaningful consent, celebration of differences and cultural competency looks like in order for any policies to promote real changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

A recent survey sponsored by Connect 2 Protect Bronx, a National Institutes of Health-funded project led locally by Montefiore Medical Center, found that while 75percent were taught about the health benefits of regular condom use, only 47 percent of participating high school students in the Bronx reported learning about condom negotiation. Just 63 percent said they were taught about healthy relationships, and a little over one third (37%) learned communication skills when it comes to sex. Even fewer—26 percent—learned about supportive LGBTQ measures in school. This is an opportune moment to build off of the city’s response to the statewide Dignity for Students Act, and strengthen teacher training for LGBTQ inclusivity and better integrate the legislation’s goals into the classroom.

All students must be taught about consent and what a healthy relationship looks like, and must be given adequate resources to prevent and respond to gender-based assault. Unfortunately, students are often currently taught that sexual responsibility lies on the shoulders of only one gender. As a result, sexual violence is rampant. The statistics are staggering—nearly one in five college women have experienced rape, and one in four have faced unwanted sexual contact. One in four women will experience intimate partner violence in her lifetime. The fight to end sexual assault and intimate partner violence must include efforts to improve sexual health education, starting many years before students even think about going to college or entering into intimate relationships. Also, all students, not just student athletes, need more awareness and education around preventing intimate partner violence. We encourage the New York State Legislature and New York City Department of Education to expand the proposed mandate beyond just public school athletic programs.

We applaud the City Council’s commitment to increasing access to anti-bullying and anti-violence education in our schools. When schools fail to adequately teach these lessons, youths enter into relationships without learning how to navigate these issues to advocate and protect themselves. And that has devastating effects on all young people of every gender. PPNYC supports comprehensive sexual education policies, consistently delivered from K through 12th grade, that are age-appropriate, medically accurate, LGBTQ tolerant, culturally competent with the goal of preparing students to make the decisions that are right for them and imparts the skills to build healthy relationships and compassionate communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue and I would be happy to take any questions or provide additional information.

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Since 1916, Planned Parenthood of New York City (PPNYC) has been an advocate for and provider of reproductive health services and education for New Yorkers. Through a threefold mission of clinical services, education, and advocacy, PPNYC is bringing better health and more fulfilling lives to each new generation of New Yorkers. As a voice for sexual and reproductive health equity, PPNYC supports legislation and policies to ensure that all New Yorkers—and, in fact, people around the world—will have access to the full range of reproductive health care services and information.