

**What this bill does:**

This bill amends the statutes pertaining to the school health education program G.S. 115C-81 in the following ways:

- ✓ It requires public schools to teach an abstinence-based comprehensive sexual health education program.
- ✓ It requires public schools to teach awareness of sexual abuse and assault risk reduction.
- ✓ It requires that materials used for instruction be factually and medically accurate and objective.
- ✓ It requires instruction on preventing unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDs, and other communicable diseases.
- ✓ It requires instruction on the effectiveness and safety of all FDA-approved contraceptive methods in preventing pregnancy including, but not limited to, emergency contraception.

**Message Points:**

- This change in North Carolina law would ensure that students receive high-quality health education that will provide them important information and skills to delay sexual intercourse and to use safer methods when they become sexually active. Only when young people have complete, accurate, and reliable information can they make informed and appropriate decisions about sex and their reproductive health.
- In 2001, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy concluded that sex and HIV education programs that discuss both abstinence and contraception delay the onset of sex, reduce the frequency of sex, and increase contraceptive use.<sup>1</sup>
- Medical experts supporting responsible sex education, not abstinence-only education include: American Academy of Pediatrics; American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; American Public Health Association; National Institutes of Health.
- According to a 2000 National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) report, 70% of young mothers drop out of high school. Teen fathers tend to complete one less semester of high school than men who are not fathers.
- Teen pregnancy cost North Carolina \$312,000,000 in 2004.<sup>2</sup>
- Sixty-three percent of North Carolina high school seniors reported having sexual intercourse at least once.<sup>3</sup>
- Nearly half of all new STDs, including HIV occur in youth between 15-24 years of age.

---

<sup>1</sup> Douglas Kirby, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, *Emerging Answers: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy*, at 95 (2001).

<sup>2</sup> National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

<sup>3</sup> 2005 NC Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

- According to the 2003 North Carolina Parent Opinion Survey conducted by the Department of Public Instruction and Department of Health and Human Services, 90.5% of parents of public school students thought sexuality education should be taught in NC public schools. The majority of parents surveyed felt the following topics were “Very Important” and should be taught as part of sexuality education at an age appropriate grade:
  - Transmission and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases.
  - Transmission and prevent of HIV/AIDs
  - What to do if one has been raped or sexually assaulted.

## **Responses to Key Arguments Against this Bill:**

### **Does Away with the Public Hearing Process**

This bill requires that the State Board of Education make available to all local schools units for review by the parents and legal guardians for at least 60 days before use. Also, this bill requires local schools boards to adopt policies to allow parents or legal guardians to withhold their consent to the student’s participation in any or all of these programs.

### **Sends Mixed Message**

Young people are sophisticated enough to understand a message that encourages them to wait, but tells them how to protect themselves from unintended pregnancy and disease when they do choose to have sex--whether that's next month or in ten years on their wedding night.

### **Promotes Homosexuality**

Sexual orientation is not a choice, and no school program can make children gay or straight. What this bill would do would be to ensure that all students know how to protect themselves, regardless of their sexual orientation. According to a recent survey of parents by DPI, most parents believe that basic information about sexual orientation should be included in sexuality education.

**Sexuality education needs to include information for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth.** Comprehensive sexuality education provides information useful to all teens, regardless of sexual orientation. LGBT youth are among those most at risk for contracting STDs, including HIV. Still, many programs ignore these young people. It is the responsibility of sexuality education programs to provide unbiased information and skills that can help all young people protect themselves.

### **Doesn't Support Marriage**

The bill does promote marriage as an important strategy for preventing disease within the context of a medically accurate curriculum.

### **Doesn't Promote Parents as the Primary Educators for Sexual Values**

This bill requires that instruction and materials shall encourage a pupil to communicate with his or her parents or legal guardians.