

Testimony on HB 2199
House Education Committee

February 13, 2015

I am writing in opposition to HB 2199 on the issue of sex education in Kansas.

As it stands in Kansas law today, parents have access to sex education curriculum and materials, they are informed of upcoming lessons, and they are provided a reasonable time frame to opt their children out of lessons if they choose. I believe this is a well-balanced approach to parental rights, the rights of children to receive an education about health and sexuality, and the responsibility of our public schools to educate our children. Schools educate and parents retain their rights to be involved in their children's education. I am proud of our state for this taking this approach.

If HB 2199 were to pass, it would require parents to provide written consent for their child's sex education. I believe this is unnecessary, given the rights parents have under current law. I also believe it is potentially harmful, making it very likely that fewer students will receive appropriate sex education—not because of parents' ethical choices necessarily, but because of the practicalities involved in obtaining written consent. Students may forget to inform their parents about the required consent or students may be unable to gain consent, particularly in homes where children are experiencing abuse or neglect. While the crafters of this bill may have the best of intentions as it relates to the rights of families and the needs of our children, I just do not believe this bill adequately takes into consideration the situations facing Kansas' most vulnerable children.

Sex education—particularly as it relates to disease and unwanted pregnancy prevention—is just too important to risk in this way. In the Social Principles of my faith tradition (the United Methodist Church) we hold that: “All children have the right to quality education, including full sex education appropriate to their stage of development that utilizes the best educational techniques and insights.” I do not believe HB 2199 is the best we can do. That is why I am urging you to defeat this bill and in doing so, to protect our children's right to quality sex education.

Sincerely,

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