

Testimony of Rev. Eleanor B. McCormick, Associate Pastor  
Plymouth Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Lawrence, KS  
Opposing House Bill 2199  
House Education Committee  
February 13, 2015

Dear Members of the House Education Committee:

HB 2199 dramatically restricts Kansas young people's access to sex education. I submit this testimony in opposition to HB 2199.

As an ordained clergy person in the United Church of Christ (UCC) my religious heritage compels me to advocate for safe environments where people can come to understand and respond to the challenges facing us as sexual beings. I believe that one of these safe spaces is and should be our schools. I trust our public schools' ability to offer excellence in sex education. Therefore, I am alarmed by the language in this bill which prohibits any district board of education from providing education on human sexuality without written parental permission. A statewide opt-in policy is a step backwards in keeping Kansas safe and healthy - for young and old alike. Additionally, a one-size fits all policy does not respect the diversity of values and beliefs present in a classroom and community.

We are called, as leaders, to realize that a lack of commitment to human sexuality education can and has been proven to have deleterious effects on the fabric of our society. We are also called to acknowledge that human sexuality is simply too important to be intentionally or unintentionally left out of a young person's public education. After counseling and offering pastoral care to many young adults as they face the challenges of unplanned pregnancies and unexpected sexually transmitted diseases I wholeheartedly believe in the importance of quality, accessible, factual sex education in our schools. Borne out of my experiences with these young adults and their families I can assure you that less exposure to information and teaching on human sexuality does not lead to less risk laden behavior - often the opposite. Throughout the congregations I have served, I have found that more informed young people make better choices. Young people provided with the opportunity to learn about human sexuality have proven to me time and time again that they are better equipped to make more responsible choices in the care of their bodies and in the care of the bodies of others.

We live in a culture that is deeply conflicted about human sexuality. That said, silencing important teaching and discussions on human sexuality in our schools does not resolve this conflict nor benefit our young people. An opt-in policy such as the one advocated for in HB 2199 dangerously diminishes our young people's opportunities for healthy and whole lives. I and my denomination are advocates of comprehensive sexuality education - which enables young people a forum in which they may better understand their family values, develop their own values, increase self-esteem and develop insights concerning long-term healthy relationships. Therefore, I encourage you to not forward this bill on for a vote.

Sincerely,

Reverend Eleanor B. McCormick  
Associate Pastor  
Plymouth Congregational Church, Lawrence, KS