



Sex ed bill nixes 'gender stereotypes'

By Elise Viebeck - 02/14/13 07:16 PM ET

A new sex education bill would give grants to programs that reject gender stereotypes and embrace LGBT students.

The legislation from Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.), Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) and 32 other Democrats encourages a "comprehensive" approach to sex ed.

In practice, this means curricula funded by the bill would teach both abstinence and safe sex, including the benefits and side effects of all methods of birth control.

The bill requires programs to emphasize emotional skills and the development of "healthy attitudes and values" about issues like body image, gender identity and sexual orientation. All teaching would be "age and developmentally appropriate."

Strict standards would apply to funded programs. None could "promote gender stereotypes," be "insensitive and unresponsive" to LGBT students, or "deliberately withhold" information about HIV.

Many provisions of the bill are likely to raise conservative ire.

One section requires that curricula refer interested students to local clinics for more information about sexual and reproductive health. In practice, those clinics could include Planned Parenthood centers.

Under another section, certain programs would be required to report information about their students' sex lives to federal health officials, including age of first intercourse, number of sexual partners and contraceptive use.

These data would be part of a broader effort to evaluate the programs, and would accompany a variety of reports about student progress.

Lee introduced the House bill Thursday, praising it as a way to give "young people the information they need ... to live healthy lives."

"Research has shown that programs which teach abstinence and contraception effectively delay the onset of sexual intercourse, reduce the number of sexual partners, and increase contraceptive use among teens," Lee said in a statement. "These programs also reduce unintended pregnancy and the transmission of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV."

The bill is the Real Education for Healthy Youth Act, and would provide five-year grants to state and local education agencies, nonprofit organizations and nonprofit or public universities to fund sex ed programs.

Priority would go to programs serving communities with high rates of unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease or sexual assault.

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