
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Kansas & Mid-Missouri**Testimony of Elise Higgins****Kansas Manager of Government Affairs****Planned Parenthood Advocates of Kansas & Mid-Missouri****Opposing Senate Bill 56****House Judiciary Committee****February 2, 2016**

Senate Bill 56 is unnecessary to protect minors, serves to further stigmatize sexuality, and criminalizes teachers for providing basic education regarding the body and human sexuality. Planned Parenthood Advocates of Kansas and Mid-Missouri opposes Senate Bill 56 for the following reasons:

Existing protections for minors are already robust:

- Kansas law makes ample provision for the protection of minors in their homes, schools and from sexual predators.
- The bill is a solution in search of a problem; no evidence exists to suggest Kansas minors are currently being harmed by a teacher in a public school knowingly showing harmful materials as defined by the bill.

Furthering fear and shame regarding sexuality negatively impacts public health:

- Proposals like SB 56 which treat any discussion of sexuality in public schools as a potential crime serve to stigmatize sexuality and lead to young adults lacking information and unable to make informed and prudent decisions.
- Stigma is a social determinant of health that can affect physical and mental health, as well as whether or not young people seek out and receive needed health services and intervention from abuse. Enforcing sexuality as a taboo topic in public schools means young people will be less able to make responsible and healthy decisions.
- The bill singles out LGBT youth with overbroad language in Section 1 (c) (8) regarding “acts of [...] homosexuality.”
- LGBTQ youth are more likely than their heterosexual peers to experience difficulties in their lives and school environments, such as violence. Consequently, LGBTQ youth are also at increased risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors, suicide attempts, and suicide. Creating a barrier to discussing issues facing these young people related to their sexuality will have a detrimental effect.

Teachers should not be criminalized for doing their jobs:

- This bill will have a chilling effect on teachers and librarians, and will lead to self-censorship across all educational disciplines in order to avoid potential prosecution.
- If a parent objects to materials taught in a public school, multiple avenues currently exist to redress that concern; threatening teachers with a class B nonperson misdemeanor for doing their jobs is dangerous and unacceptable.

Planned Parenthood urges the committee to reject this extreme legislation that does nothing to improve the health or well being of young people and serves to criminalize teachers.