

RESTRICTING ACCESS TO SEX ED

By Sen. Ana Maria Rodriguez and Rep. Linda Chaney

Under current law, a public school student whose parent makes a written request to the school principal shall be exempted from the teaching of reproductive health or any disease, including HIV/AIDS, in accordance with the provisions of s. [1003.42\(3\)](#).

SB 410/ HB 545 would require parents/guardians to proactively opt-in to sexual health education for their student. The standard now is to opt-out.

Providing young people with the information they need to make responsible decisions about their sexual health is critical to reducing unintended teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

The scientific evidence shows that comprehensive sex education helps young adults withstand pressures and promotes healthy, responsible and mutually protective relationships.

Every national, state or local poll on sex education shows that parents, teens and the general public overwhelmingly support comprehensive sex education that includes information on topics such as birth control, abstinence, healthy relationships and STD prevention. Leading medical and public health organizations, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics also support comprehensive sex education.

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SB 410 would create an additional barrier to sex-ed and would likely lead to fewer young people in Florida receiving the sex education they need at a critical point in their lives. As a result, more young people could engage in sexual activity without being taught about safety, consequences, relationships, and their own bodies.

Evaluations of comprehensive sex education and HIV/STI prevention programs show that they do not increase rates of sexual initiation, do not lower the age at which youth initiate sex, and do not increase the frequency of sex or the number of sex partners among sexually active youth.

Research from the National Survey of Family Growth assessed the impact of sex education for young people ages 15-19 and found that teens who received comprehensive sex education were 50 percent less likely to experience pregnancy than those who received abstinence-only programs.

While we're in the midst of a pandemic that has infected more than a million Floridians and continues to kill Floridians every day. Getting this public health crisis under control should be our priority, not making it harder for young people to learn about safe sex.

Studies have shown that those of us who receive comprehensive sex education are more likely to delay sexual activity and to use contraceptives when we do become sexually active. Having comprehensive sexual education would provide young people with the knowledge to protect themselves from STD/HIV and unintended pregnancy.

It is imperative for the health of our young people that we provide our students comprehensive, medically accurate and age-appropriate information.