



LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

Bill: **SB199/HB119 Comprehensive Health Education**

Organization: PFLAG Salisbury Inc., PO Box 5107, Salisbury Maryland 21802

Submitted by: Nicole Hollywood, President of the Board

Position: **FAVORABLE**

SALISBURY PFLAG SUPPORTS COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH EDUCATION

I am submitting this testimony in FAVOR of **SB199/HB119** on behalf of PFLAG Salisbury, the Salisbury, Maryland Chapter of PFLAG National.

It is vital that our State's health education be updated to be comprehensive, inclusive, age-appropriate, and relevant. School-based health education helps young people acquire an accurate and purposeful understanding of their own health that will strengthen positive attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors necessary for them to adopt and maintain healthy behaviors throughout their lives. Studies have found that students who receive comprehensive health education make safer, more informed, less destructive choices, and are better at exerting agency over themselves. Further, the research shows that improving the health acumen of young people not only has a positive influence over their personal choices but can also impact the behaviors of their peers, family members, and others in the community.

Building the health knowledge of young people ensures that teens learn to think about what is right and safe for them, and how to avoid coercion, sexually transmitted infections, and early and unintended pregnancies. Most importantly, it helps to keep young people safe from abuse by teaching them about their bodies.

There are also economic benefits to comprehensive health education as exhaustive health education can increase health literacy, the lack of which is estimated by the US Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion to cost the nation \$1.6 to \$3.6 trillion dollars annually.

The National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy by the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) includes the goal to "Incorporate accurate, standards-based, and developmentally appropriate health and science information and curricula in childcare and education through the university level". Additionally, the National Committee on the Future of School Health Education, the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) and the American School Health Association (ASHA), developed recommendations for strengthening school health education. The recommendations include- developing and adopting standardized measures of health literacy in children and including them in state accountability systems; changing policies, practices,

and systems for quality school health education; and stronger alignment and coordination between the public health and education sectors.

Salisbury PFLAG supports comprehensive health education and SB199/HB119 and recommends a FAVORABLE report in committee.