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Commentary on H.663 before the House Human Services Committee
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In 2001, the Vermont House of Representatives passed H.218, a Parental Notification for Abortion bill, with bipartisan support. The primary advocate for the parental notification bill was Vermont Right to Life, while Planned Parenthood of Northern New England led the opposition. Vermont Right to Life strongly supports parental involvement laws because they benefit minors through improved medical care and protection from sexual assault, and most importantly, reduce the number of abortions. The *Vermont Law Review* (a journal published by Vermont Law School students) subsequently published an article discussing parental rights and responsibilities, and the need for the law. The article noted that the Vermont Supreme court has stated:

Parental rights and responsibilities are defined as those “rights and responsibilities related to a child’s physical living arrangements, parent child contact, education, medical and dental care, religion, travel, and any other matter involving a child’s welfare and upbringing.”

Yet parents’ rights continue to be ignored and diminished by Planned Parenthood and others who provide abortions and contraceptives to children without parental involvement. Under H.663, would there be an opt-out option for those parents who do not want their children given contraceptive drugs and devices at school? Or would schools be allowed to provide contraceptives to students without parental knowledge or consent?

The same Law Review article noted that then-Vermont law criminalized sex with a child under 16. Current Vermont law on sexual assault includes that:

- (c) No person shall engage in a sexual act with a child who is under the age of 16, except:
 - (1) where the persons are married to each other and the sexual act is consensual; or
 - (2) where the person is less than 19 years old, the child is at least 15 years old, and the sexual act is consensual

H.663 mandates schools provide contraceptive drugs and devices to all secondary school students – which includes children 12 years old or possibly even younger. How can this be reconciled with Vermont’s sexual assault statute? Would schools simply turn a blind eye and ignore it? In doing so, would they open themselves up to lawsuits by parents they fail to inform or victims they fail to protect?

Despite Vermont’s mandatory reporting law, many cases of sexual assault or abuse go unreported. In 2000, 12 girls under the age of sixteen obtained abortions from Planned Parenthood in Vermont. Then-Planned Parenthood of Northern New England CEO Nancy Mosher testified before the Vermont House Health and Welfare Committee in 2001 that PPNNE had not notified authorities in each case.

In March 2009, WCAX reported on the case of 31-year old James Spearman, accused of sexual assault on a 15-year old girl. The girl became pregnant and had an abortion, but the provider did not file a report despite the girl's age. As a result, DNA evidence was lost. Nationally, numerous criminal and civil cases have revealed Planned Parenthood's failure to report abuse. What about PPNNE? Are they making reports of suspected abuse? Are they taking steps to make sure their clients are not being victimized by sexual predators, caught in human trafficking, or being abused by a relative or partner?

We need to be concerned. The 2017 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that six percent of Vermont high school students have ever experienced forced sexual intercourse, and nearly 7 percent experienced some sort of sexual violence in the past year.

Unlike most parents, Planned Parenthood does not believe, nor do they teach, that abstinence from sexual activity is the best option for student health and well-being. They teach kids that the time to have sex is when they are "ready," regardless of age. Planned Parenthood is already in six middle schools in Vermont, and is looking to expand into more. And H.663 will facilitate that process.

Speaking now as a parent, in my local school district, the Barre Unified Union District, condoms are available to students in grades 7 – 12. I have asked for information about what would happen if a child under the age of 15 asked for condoms, given Vermont's sexual assault statute. I have not received an answer. The materials the school distributes with the condoms includes an information sheet about sexting, making it very clear that any nude photo of a child under 18 could be considered child pornography, which is always illegal. However, it does not make it clear that sexual activity involving children under 15 is always against the law.

The sexuality indoctrination my child received at Spaulding High School was basically a free advertisement for Planned Parenthood. The web-based assignments had links to Planned Parenthood, and constant reminders that they are the ones to go to for services and parents can be kept in the dark. One assignment given presented the scenario that two kids wanted to have sex, but did not want to get pregnant. Students were asked to describe 3 ways the kids could have *their wants and needs met*.

We would never, ever allow tobacco companies to teach about cigarettes and smoking prevention, but we let a multi-million dollar organization with a clear state and national political agenda ever more access to Vermont's kids. I resent that my public school is promoting, and my tax dollars are going, to Planned Parenthood so they can undermine me as their parent and put my children's wellbeing at risk.