



VERMONT PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION

MEMO

From the Desk of Jay Nichols

The Vermont Principals' Association supports school leaders to improve the equity and quality of educational opportunities for all students.

Testimony H. 663: Schools; contraceptives

The major points of my testimony was written in anticipation on speaking to the original language of the bill as introduced. I have seven points that I wanted to make that I think may be instructive to the committee and I'd be happy to answer any questions after each point or at the end. I want to be clear that many of the points I have were concerns I wanted to share with the committee which I believe you have already addressed.

1. In terms of curriculum related to health teaching in general, and sexuality curriculum specifically, I do not believe we need a law. Guidance and direction from the Agency of Education and the Agency of Health and Human Services on current law and expectations for schools, as well as human resource support where necessary is a better approach. Additionally, the Vermont Licensing Standards Board for Educators needs to provide easier pathways and training for educators to pick up a health endorsement - this is especially important for small high schools and schools in socially-economically challenged communities.
2. If contraceptives are going to be given out by the school, they should be distributed by the health office. School nurses have the training and the expertise to distribute these products and make sure students understand limitations of products (e.g. related to sexually transmitted disease, not just pregnancy prevention). According to the latest results from the

- Youth Risk Behavior Survey, sexually transmitted diseases are continuing to rise significantly for teenagers. Part of the reason we believe this is occurring is because students mistakenly believe that a device or drug that may prevent pregnancy is the only physical consequence they need to consider before engaging in sexual activity.
3. Plan B or morning after bill should not be included in any bill. This puts school officials into a tough spot both in terms of local political pressures and local religious beliefs. What is your intent with this piece? Plan B can be described as emergency contraceptive.
 4. Fiscal Note? What will the cost be? If this is essentially to be another unfunded mandate to further increase school budgets and raise local taxpayers school tax this is a concern. As this is rightly a significant state health service issue, schools should be provided these over-the counter contraceptive devices and products at no cost to the school district.
 5. If the General Assembly decides to have a law related to this issue, the law must be crystal clear so that schools know exactly what it is they are required to do.
 6. DCF Reports for sexually active kids that are underage? What happens to the school if they provide a 14-year-old girl with a contraceptive device when they know she has an 18 year old boyfriend?
 7. Most high schools already provide condoms free of charge. These are put in a student-friendly place and any high school student has access to them without judgement or stigma being a concern. In these situations, student personnel do not know who is choosing to take a condom.