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HB195 is Bad for Alabama's Youth



Montgomery, Ala. - On February 22, 2024, the Alabama Reproductive Health, Rights, & Justice Coalition (ARHRJC) became aware of HB195, filed by Representative Susan DuBose (R-Hoover), which would prohibit the teaching of any sexual health education outside of abstinence-only-until-marriage. ARHRJC stands firmly against HB195.

Abstinence-only-until-marriage programs have failed to protect Alabama's youth from delaying unplanned pregnancy, as evidenced by Alabama having the fifth highest teen pregnancy rate in the country. Leading medical organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), and the Society for Adolescent Medicine (SAM) oppose abstinence-only programs for deliberately withholding or distorting potentially life-saving information about contraception and STI prevention. Alongside Alabama's teen birth rate, we have a near total abortion ban in place. This makes abstinence-only programs unrealistic at best, and harmful at worst.

"HB195 is bad for Alabama's youth. In our work with young people, we hear how much they need and want medically accurate, comprehensive sex education," said Alabama Campaign for Adolescent Sexual Health (ACASH) executive director, Christina Clark Okarmus. "Alabama lawmakers have no place legislating whether or not young people can access basic factual information, like how to care for their health. Whether someone has sex on their prom night or their wedding night, they need to know how to care for their sexual health."

HB195 would only allow public schools to discuss abstinence, and would penalize any educator or school administrator who provided information on "safer sex" approaches, including medically-accurate discussions of condoms and contraception.

In 2017, the University of South Alabama surveyed Alabama parents of school-aged youth in a statewide study, and found that 97.5% of parents believe it is somewhat or very important that their children learn to talk with a partner about birth control and STIs¹. The survey also found that 98.1% of parents believe it is somewhat or very important that their children learn about the use of condoms. (Millner, Turens, & Shaw, 2017)

¹ Millner, V., Turens, J., & Shaw, T. 2017. *Attitudes of Alabama Parents of Public School Children Regarding Sex Education for Their Children in Public Schools*.
<https://alabamacampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Alabama-Parental-Attitudes-Study.pdf>

“This bill is bad for kids, and parents don’t want it,” said Clark Okarmus. “We consistently hear from parents about how they would like comprehensive sex education to be taught. But right now, the parental rights extremists are in the ears of lawmakers. We’re here to remind them that they don’t get to call the shots.”

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