

For Immediate Release: April 4, 2025

Contact: Christina Clark Okarmus, Alabama Campaign for Adolescent Sexual Health
christina@alabamacampaign.org, 334-265-8004



SB277 Puts Alabama Youth at Risk

Montgomery, Ala. - On April 1, 2025, Senator Shey Shelnett filed SB277, a bill that would prohibit the teaching of any sexual health education outside of “sexual risk avoidance”. Sexual risk avoidance is the rebranded term for abstinence-only-until-marriage, which is known to be a harmful attempt to control and shame young people about sexual activity while offering no knowledge or skills on how to protect themselves within a sexual relationship. ACASH stands firmly against SB277.

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.

“SB277 outlines sexual risk avoidance as optimal health for young people, but it deceives youth, parents, and the public,” said Alabama Campaign for Adolescent Sexual Health (ACASH) executive director, Christina Clark Okarmus. “More than half of Alabama youth leave high school with at least one sexual experience. By giving them abstinence-only-until-marriage education, they will not learn how to use contraception or condoms, nor will they know where to get these items when they are needed.”

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, Turrens, & Shaw, 2017)

“Parents consistently tell us that their kids need comprehensive sex education,” said Clark Okarmus. “By limiting the information that young people receive from trusted adults, we are inviting them to find the answers to their questions from the internet or their peers. Adults need to do better and give youth the information they need, not just the information we want them to have.”

-END-

¹ Millner, V., Turrens, 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>