

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

NEW YORK'S YOUTH DESERVE COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION

A.6616 Nolan/S.2584A Brouk

The New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NYSCADV) urges the New York State Legislature to pass this legislation, which provides students in grades K-12 with age-appropriate, medically accurate, and inclusive sexuality and healthy relationships education.

Information is power. When young people have the tools necessary to make healthy decisions about their bodies and their relationships, they can make informed decisions about their future. Currently, New York State does not have a consistent requirement for schools to teach sex education. This creates a patchwork of inequities across the state where a young person's ability to access quality information is largely based on their zip code. Some districts offer robust programming with highly skilled educators, while others meet the bare minimum (e.g., one segment of HIV/AIDS prevention in both middle and high school.) Even with this minimum requirement, there are districts that still refuse to speak to certain pieces of HIV/AIDS prevention, waging a great disservice to future generations. LGBTQ+, BIPOC, immigrant youth, and youth living in rural areas are often left behind in the current model.

Comprehensive sex education covers issues like healthy relationships, bullying, body image, basic hygiene, self-esteem, and so much more. Learning about these topics is critical for young adults to understand the foundation of a healthy relationship. Intimate partner violence starts early and continues throughout the lifespan. About 11 million women and five million men reported first experiencing sexual violence, physical violence or stalking by an intimate partner before the age of 18¹. Comprehensive sex education gives young people the opportunity to identify the markers of a healthy relationship while recognizing the red flags. Primary prevention strategies, included in comprehensive sex education's foundational curriculum, address the root causes and conditions that make domestic violence possible. Public health research has shown that implementing prevention activities at multiple levels on the social ecology scale – individual, relationship, community, and societal – will lead to lasting social change.

All young people deserve access to the information and resources necessary to build a healthy future.

ABOUT NYSCADV:

Established in 1978, NYSCADV is designated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as the information clearinghouse, primary point of contact, and resource center on domestic violence for the State of New York. NYSCADV is responsible for supporting the development of policies, protocol, and procedures to enhance domestic violence intervention and prevention and also provides education and technical assistance to the network of primary-purpose domestic violence service providers statewide.

For more information, contact: Joan Gerhardt, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, 518.482.5465

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1. Division of Violence Prevention. (2021). Preventing Intimate Partner Violence [Fact sheet]. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/ipv/IPV-factsheet_2021.pdf

