

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

MANDATORY EDUCATION ON HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUAL EDUCATION FOR K-12 STUDENTS

A.6616 Nolan/S.2584 Brouk

The New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NYSCADV) urges the New York State Legislature to pass this legislation, which seeks to establish an age-appropriate comprehensive sexual education program focused on healthy relationships for students in grades K-12 attending public and charter schools.

Presently, New York State does not require schools to provide age-appropriate education on healthy relationships or sexual education, with the exception of the prevention of HIV/AIDS. Therefore, the provision of education about healthy relationships, and reproductive and sexual health, across schools in New York State is inconsistent and varies from classroom to classroom. This means that many of New York State's young people cannot identify healthy relationships from unhealthy ones.

Healthy relationships education is a form of primary prevention, which aims to identify and promote strategies that stop violence before it starts. By providing healthy relationships education, our young people will learn how to respect themselves and others, the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships, and how to respond if one's partner is engaging in unhealthy relationship behavior. The CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey and the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey data indicated that, in the U.S., approximately 1 in 4 females and 1 in 7 males experience intimate partner violence under the age of 18.¹

NYSCADV supports the passage of this legislation which would amend Education Law to:

- Direct the Dept. of Education (DOE) and the Dept. of Health (DOH), to create age-appropriate K-12 comprehensive sexual education program to be taught in all public and charter schools;
- Provide that education will include age-appropriate instruction on healthy relationships, bullying, consent, and reproductive and sexual health;
- Require DOE and DOH to periodically review the education program and update it as needed;
- Direct DOE to provide resources to support school implementation and monitor compliance; and
- Provide an opt-out provision for parents and caregivers who do not want their children to participate in the curriculum.

NYSCADV urges the NYS Legislature to pass this legislation as soon as possible. New York State must provide education on healthy relationships. It is critical that our young people develop knowledge and skills needed to navigate the world.

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 Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2020). Preventing Teen Dating Violence. Available: https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/ipv/TDV-factsheet_2020.pdf