



MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT
Comprehensive Sexuality Education for All New Yorkers
A.4604 (Gonzalez-Rojas)
April 6, 2023

The Community Health Care Association of New York State (CHCANYS) strongly supports A.4604 (Gonzalez-Rojas) which would mandate age-appropriate K-12 comprehensive sexuality education across New York State.

CHCANYS is the statewide association of New York's 70+ federally qualified health centers (FQHC), also known as community health centers (CHCs). Community health centers operate in low-income and medically underserved communities, providing a full range of primary and preventive health care and enabling services for more than 2.3 million patients at over 800 sites, regardless of insurance, immigration status, or ability to pay. Among our patients, 89% are low income, 68% are Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and other people of color, 13% are uninsured, and 59% are enrolled in Medicaid or Child Health Plus.

Everyone deserves access to information and resources to make informed decisions about their health. Unfortunately, New York State currently does not have a consistent requirement for schools to provide sex education. The only minimum requirement is to provide HIV/AIDS prevention education in middle school and high school. Even then, there are some school districts that refuse to provide information on certain pieces of HIV/AIDS prevention, which is a detriment to New York State's commitment to ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Ultimately, this has led to inequitable provision of sex education and access to quality information across the State – leaving many young people, especially Black, Indigenous, and people of color, LGBTQ+, and immigrant youth, with no tools to make healthy and informed decisions about their bodies and relationships.

The need for comprehensive sexuality education is especially critical when, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention¹, 15–24-year-olds account for half of all new STD infections. Additionally, the CDC estimates that young people ages 15-24 account for almost half of the 26 million new sexually transmitted infections that occurred in the United States in 2018. Comprehensive sexuality education has proven to be effective at increasing positive health outcomes – from lower rates of STIs to fewer unintended pregnancies. By providing consistent comprehensive sexuality education covering issues like consent, healthy relationships, bullying, and body image, all young people will have the tools and knowledge needed to navigate their health and well-being.

CHCANYS urges the New York State Legislature to pass A.4604 (Gonzalez-Rojas) to ensure that all young New Yorkers (and the adults that they will eventually become) have the information and resources necessary to make healthy and informed decisions about their health and well-being by requiring all schools to provide comprehensive sexuality education. Doing so will also greatly advance New York State's efforts to ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic and advance health equity.

For more information, please contact Marie Mongeon, Vice President of Policy, at mmongeon@chcanys.org.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/std/life-stages-populations/adolescents-youngadults.htm>