

Colorado Public Health Association testimony on behalf of HB 1081

March 7, 2013

Madame Chair, members of the committee: I am Dr. Christine Nevin-Woods, Public Health Director of the Pueblo City County Health Department. I write on behalf of the Colorado Public Health Association to express our strong support of HB 1081.

I have been a practicing physician for over 30 years in family medicine and now public health/preventive medicine and am a fellow of the American College of Preventive Medicine.

In terms of adolescent sexual health, I was the doctor for a teen pregnancy clinic for 10 years and cared for over 500 pregnant girls during that time. I currently provide family planning and STD services at the Pueblo City County Health Department. I have taught classes to parents on "how to talk to your kids about sex" and sexuality/sexual education/puberty classes over the years in Catholic grade school and public schools and at Colorado State University-Pueblo. But of most importance, I am the mother of 4 biologic children and 2 foster teens.

Sexual education from parents is the best place for children to receive human sexuality education but this does not happen on a consistent basis. Most teens are woefully ignorant of the anatomy and physiology of their bodies and many do not understand the critical details that will keep them healthy from STDs, pregnancy, and emotional trauma. It is our responsibility to openly teach them and answer their questions so they can make good decisions.

In February of this year, I was asked to speak at a research conference at CSU on teen pregnancy research. I presented the following information:

- Using abstinence only education at this point is not recommended by any of the medical and youth professional organizations as evidence by a high quality systematic review of the research on sexual education published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine in 2012. The review strongly showed that comprehensive risk reduction education was evidence based and effective but was unable to determine if abstinence education has any effectiveness.
- The Centers for Disease Control, Advocates for Youth, American Academy of Pediatrics, and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy stated that while abstinence is the preferred behavior, they all recommend evidence based comprehensive, medically accurate, programs within schools and in community programs. These should include abstinence as the preferred behavior.

Based on the research and my experience, I strongly recommend that programs in schools be taught by professional educators using science based, medically accurate, sexual education programs emphasizing abstinence and responsibility, which includes the use of condoms and a hormone method of birth control if sexually active.

I am available for questions. I can be reached at 719 583 4512 or cnw@co.pueblo.co.us.