

To: Minnesota House of Representatives Committee on Education Policy

From: Sara Iliyana Lam, Prior Lake, 55B

My name is Sara Iliyana Lam , I am 17 years old, from Prior Lake and a constituent in MN House District 55B represented by Representative Tony Albright. I am writing in support of House File 358/Senate File 632.

I grew up in Kansas City, Missouri for 12 years of my life. As you would guess, my education was subpar compared to Minnesota even though I went to the top school district in my city. I pride myself on how I've conquered Minnesota's difficult curriculum and managed to keep up even though I was behind. Despite Minnesota's superior STEM opportunities and curriculum, I honestly found my sex education experience to be better in Missouri than Minnesota. Don't get me wrong, Missouri has a load of work to do when it comes to education, especially sex education. However, when I moved here, I noticed my education severely lacking in menstrual education, from the smallest things like how to put in a tampon to bigger disorders like endometriosis and PCOS. My fifth grade teachers taught me how to put in a pad at 9 years old. I moved here in 7th grade and watched men in sperm costumes chase a girl across the street at 12 years old.

My experience with sex education at Prior Lake has not been easy. When I was in 7th grade, some boys poked my back with a pencil because my training bra was showing. This immaturity was not due to sexual attraction nor was it "boys being boys." These boys were taught to disrespect girls and our bodies. Boys and children catch on to stigma and shame. In this case, these boys didn't understand how girls grew or developed, or how painful and draining puberty is; they just knew that, for girls, it was shameful and embarrassing.

My experience in 9th grade improved. I learned about contraceptives and consent, but what good is this knowledge if you don't know how to apply it? Can you pass a road test only having been to in-class driver's ed or would you prefer to have behind the wheel lessons? Well, knowing the effectiveness of a condom, the pill, etc does not help us if we don't know how to access them; knowing that the sperm fertilizes the egg does not help us if we don't know how it happens. I've heard an unhealthy amount of people say that you can't get pregnant through unprotected anal or oral sex, and before you think "kids knowing how to have sex will only

encourage them to have sex," spoiler alert: we already know. We know through innuendos, porn, TV shows, our friends — We know how to have sex, but we also know how to treat our bodies.

I ask that you trust us. Trust us, so we can trust you. As everyone knows, knowledge is power. By knowing our bodies and knowing how to protect ourselves, we will make better decisions now and when we're adults. I would rather explore my sexuality within the safety of my home and family, than explore my sexuality with no one to fall back on if I am hurt.

The policy outlined in HF 358/SF 632 directly impacts the lives of young people in Minnesota like me. I ask the members of the Education Policy Committee to consider the lived experiences and overwhelming support of students across our state when voting on this bill. Increased access to comprehensive, shame free, medically accurate, and culturally responsive sex-education would improve the lives and overall health outcomes of current and future generations of Minnesotans. Please support HF 358/SF 632.

Thank you for your time,
Sara Iliyana Lam