

To the members of the Preventative Health Policy Committee in the House of Representatives,

My name is Sahar Khanpour and I am writing to you because I am concerned about the sex education program in Minnesota. I am an undergraduate junior at the University of Minnesota, and a strong advocate for the bolstering of more sex positive and pleasure informed education to communities that is culturally and religiously sensitive. Currently, Minnesotas sex education program requires sex education to be only education on STIs and abstinence, it lacks a hollistic view of individuals and the various ways that cultures, religions, sexual orientation, gender identity, consent, healthy relationships, most importantly pleasure may impact an individual ([citation](#)). This issue negatively impacts the youth who are recieving these very narrow messages of what sex and sexuality is and what sex and sexuality look like ([citation](#)). This in turn acts as a risk factor for youth and their families because they may not receive comprehensive education regarding sex and sexuality, leading to undiagnised STIs and possible death due to them (186). Not all families are equipped financially to be able to take care of their youth who are struggling with STIs (186). In addition to this, not all families are able to provide accurate representations of what sex and sexuality can bring into a youths life. By including pleasure in sex eduaction, this will allow for a more sex positive enviornment that youth and their families can grow and develop in. This leads to more fluent communication regarding sex, and thus to an increase in familial satisfaction and harmony ([citation](#)). Currently, the safe sex education policies and requirements are: “Minnesota schools are required to teach sex education. Curriculum is not required to be comprehensive. Curriculum must include instruction that helps students abstain from sexual activity until marriage. Curriculum is not required to include instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity. Curriculum is not required to include instruction on consent. Curriculum must be available for parental review. Parents or guardians may remove their children from instruction if they object to the content. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy”. Minnesota has no standard regarding medically accurate sex education. However, the curriculum is required to be “technically accurate” ([citation](#)). This is incredibly detrimental to youth, due to the fact that these requirements do not benefit anyone, except those who do not have intersectional identities, which is very scarce. By reconstructing the requirements to include a curriculum that is comprehensive, that puts an emphasis on pleasure in sexual encounters, includes information on sexual orientation, gender identity, consent, and requires that all youth attend means that more youth will be better prepared for their sexual encounters and intersectional identities in the future.

Sex eduaction today puts heavy emphasis on the negative and dangerous aspects of sex, deterring youth from taking part in sex, or herding them towards it at an increase in speed without the proper information on what to expect ([citation](#)). This is mostly due to the fact that there is never any mention of pleasure in sex education. By including pleasure as a required compenent in sex education for youth, there will be a decrease in negative sexual encounters, and an increase in positive sexual encounters. According to Planned Parenthood: “Not only are students who are given comprehensive sex education choosing to have sex at a later age, but they’re also

more likely to use birth control when they do have sex” (citation). This means that with accurate information, youth are more aware of their bodily autonomy. Pleasure based education emphasizes the pleasure-focus in regards to sexual activity and normalizes the idea to give and receive pleasure, not just in sexual activity but in relationships as a whole (citation). This in turn leads to healthier relationships for not only the student and future partner but also familial relationships and friendships (citation).

It is also important to be able to approach different students with sensitivity to their intersectional identities. Many students of color may struggle with the messages of Western sex education, possibly leading to more negative sexual encounters (citation). They may find the conflicting messages of home and school difficult to reconcile with. For example, as an Iranian-American student, it has always been difficult for me to navigate my sexuality within the Western world in comparison to my Iranian identity. I had wished that someone would have been able to show me the depths of both my Iranian and American interpretations of sexuality. This would have improved my own communication with my family, leading to less conflict and a more sex positive and pleasure focused environment. Thus, it is important to remain sensitive to youths' intersectional identities. By doing this, it can improve home environments with more culturally appropriate language, leading to cultivating healthy relationships for not only themselves but their families.

Thank you,
Sahar Khanpour