February 9th, 2021

To: Minnesota House of Representatives Committee on Education Policy

From: Gwendolyn Fairlie, Saint Paul, MN, District 66B

My name is Gwen, I am 22 years old, from Saint Paul and a constituent in MN House District 66B represented by Representative Athena Hollins. I am writing in support of House File 358/Senate File 632.

Access to factual and comprehensive sex education is something that every student deserves. The best way to ensure that young people enter the world ready to make informed decisions is to make sure that they have the right toolkit of information. Providing students with less than accurate or surface-level education is much worse than simply providing students with the full picture, even if it feels awkward in a class setting. I went to high school in Rosemount, Minnesota, and although our curriculum included sex education, the material was minimal and vague. This meant that I, as well as my peers, sought out information from other sources--namely, the internet. While there is nothing wrong with students exploring their questions online, leaving them to do the research by themselves means that they may find false or even hurtful information if they do not know what they are looking for. With comprehensive sex education, students can make informed decisions with less shame, contributing to lower rates of STD transmission, teen pregnancy, and sexual violence and harrassment.

Classrooms are supposed to be a safe space for learning, and sex education cannot be left out of them. 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 experiences of young people in Minnesota when voting for the policy outlined in HF 358/SF 632. Increased access to comprehensive and medically accurate sex-education would improve the health and overall life experience of future students in Minnesota. Please support HF 358/SF 632.

Thank you so much for your time,

Gwendolyn Fairlie