

**March 12, 2024**

Members of the House Education Policy Committee  
*Via Electronic Delivery*

**Re: Letter in Support of House File 3682**

Chair Cwodinski and Members of the Education Policy Committee:

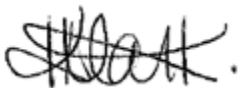
Kristen Mark, PhD, MPH and Michael Gendernalik, MSW have submitted this letter to express our support for House File 3682. Dr. Kristen Mark is a Professor and a sex and relationship researcher, educator, and therapist with over a decade of experience in the field where she has contributed to over 75 peer-reviewed academic publications and given over 125 talks on the topic nationally and internationally. Michael Gendernalik is a social worker and sexual and gender health educator where they have over a decade of experience in the field, dating back to when they were a sexual health peer educator as a teen.

Today, we are writing in support of House File 3682, which would designate the commissioner of education to begin the rulemaking process to adopt statewide academic standards in health. The establishment of such standards would take actionable steps toward ensuring that all Minnesotans are equipped with the knowledge and skills to attain their highest level of health. Furthermore, these standards aim to center the wellbeing of young people and provide the necessary tools to make informed decisions and positive impacts on themselves and their peers throughout their lifespan.

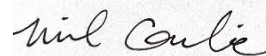
Young people are at risk of continued health hazards such as disease, psychological stressors, substance misuse, violence, and more without these standards. A holistic approach to health education is essential to preventing harm and creating safer and thriving communities across the state of Minnesota. The development of these standards further builds a Minnesota that upholds our reputation for being a national leader in education.

As professionals in the field of sexual and gender health with a focus on harm reduction and health promotion, establishing statewide health standards will empower the youth of Minnesota to live safer and healthier lives and have long-term benefits in communities across the state. Dr. Kristen Mark and Michael Gendernalik respectfully request your support for House File 3682.

In Community,



Kristen Mark, PhD, MPH  
dr.kristen.mark@gmail.com



Michael Gendernalik, MSW  
mkgender@gmail.com

February 29, 2024

Rep. Carlie Kotyza-Witthuhn  
567 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155



Sen. Mary Kunesh  
3209 Minnesota Senate Bldg.  
St. Paul, MN 55155



RE: SF 3746

Rep. Kotyza Witthuhn and Sen. Kunesh,

Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) represents all 331 school boards across Minnesota. They are locally elected officials and are responsible for the governance of all public schools.

One of our school boards' responsibilities is to adopt standards for student learning in health. This responsibility is one they take great care in ensuring the standards meet student, family and community needs and values. We have strong concerns with removal of local decision-making as it relates to locally adopted health standards. MSBA has a long standing legislative position adopted by our Delegate Assembly in 2019.

*4.010 Urges the legislature to retain a school district's local authority in determining curriculum, course offerings, graduation requirements, and other locally developed standards, where applicable.*

In addition, our partner organizations, Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA), Minnesota Elementary School Principals (MESPA) and Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) joins us in sharing our concerns with you. We ask you to consider the following reasons for local school boards to retain the authority, and responsibility, to adopt local health standards:

**Community Engagement:** Local decision-making fosters community involvement and buy-in. Parents, educators, and community members want to have a strong voice in shaping policies that affect their children's health and well-being.

**Diverse Local Needs:** Local control allows for district solutions that address the unique circumstances and demographics of Minnesota's communities. Adopting statewide standards could overlook these differences and impose a one-size-fits-all approach, which may not be effective or feasible for every community.

**Accountability and Responsibility:** Local control encourages constituent accountability among school boards and administrators. Districts are directly accountable to the community for the health outcomes of their students, and they can be held responsible for the effectiveness of the health standards adopted.

In summary, while statewide health standards may offer consistency and uniformity, they risk overlooking local needs and undermining community engagement that our families and communities want. Local control provides the flexibility, accountability, and responsiveness necessary to address the diverse health challenges facing K-12 students effectively.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you.

Respectfully,

Minnesota School Boards Association

Minnesota Association of School Administrators

Minnesota Elementary School Principals

Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals



March 11, 2024

**H.F. 3682: Physical and Sexual Abuse Standards  
Letter of Support- Minnesota School Counselor Association**

Minnesota school counselors have a legal, ethical, and moral responsibility to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to the proper authorities. School counselors work to identify the behavioral, academic, and social/emotional impact of abuse and neglect on students and ensure the necessary supports for students are in place.

In addition to the reporting aspects of our jobs as school counselors, school counselors also:

- Understand child abuse and neglect and its impact on children's academic, career and social/emotional development
- Provide interventions promoting resiliency, healthy interpersonal and communication skills and self-worth
- Make referrals to outside agencies when appropriate
- Engage families in the school community
- Identify barriers and limitations that affect healthy family functioning and may lead to child abuse or neglect
- Identify instances of child abuse and neglect and respond on both individual and systemic levels
- Provide professional development in consultation on child abuse to school staff, families and the school community

Minnesota school counselors recognize that as school systems that see and support youth on some of the most constant and consistent bases it makes sense to include child physical and sexual abuse prevention instruction and are in full support.

Minnesota school counselors also recognize that it cannot be left to the schools and employees in the school districts to do this work in a silo and would encourage the legislature to continue partnering with various agencies, non-profits, communities, families, and others to address child abuse in all its forms in a proactive and preventive way.

Sincerely,



President, Minnesota School Counselor Association



663 UNIVERSITY AVENUE WEST  
SUITE 200  
SAINT PAUL, MN 55104

PHONE 651.789.2090

RE: Support for [HF3682](#) (Rep. Kotyza-Witthuhn)

March 13, 2024

Dear Chair Laurie Pryor and Members of the Education Policy Committee:

Gender Justice is the organizational home of UnRestrict Minnesota, an expansive, diverse, and inclusive coalition for reproductive rights, health, and justice. UnRestrict Minnesota is a multi-racial coalition of more than 30 health care clinics, abortion funds, practical support groups, LGBTQ advocacy groups, faith communities, organizers, lawyers, doulas, and many more.

We are writing in support of [HF3682](#) (Rep. Kotyza-Witthuhn), which would designate the commissioner of education to begin the rulemaking process to adopt statewide academic standards in health. The establishment of such standards would take actionable steps toward ensuring that all Minnesotans are equipped with the knowledge and skills to attain their highest level of health. Furthermore, these standards aim to center the wellbeing of young people and provide the necessary tools to make informed decisions and positive impacts on themselves and their peers throughout their lifespan.

Too many young people fail to receive the health information, education, and access to the care they need to live healthy lives. A holistic approach to health education is essential to preventing harm and creating safer and thriving communities across the state of Minnesota.

As a coalition of organizations working to ensure that people of all genders have a meaningful right to bodily autonomy, safety, health, and opportunity, we support establishing health standards that provide youth with the information they need to live healthy lives.

The UnRestrict Minnesota coalition with Gender Justice respectfully requests your support for [HF3682](#) (Rep. Kotyza-Witthuhn). Thank you for your leadership!

Sincerely,

Monica Meyer  
Political Director, Gender Justice



March 6, 2024

Dear Members of the House Education Policy Committee:

NAMI Minnesota supports HF 3682 which will require state standards for health education. It's important for students in Minnesota to receive factual information in a developmentally appropriate manner. All subjects follow state standards, except for health.

Included in health standards is mental health education. At a time when so many students are struggling with their mental health it's important to have state standards on the information students should receive about mental health, mental illnesses, and suicide prevention. For example, information presented on suicide in the wrong way could promote contagion or further stress for a student.

We hope that in a future legislative session work could be funded to develop curricula on mental health education. There are very few programs across the country that are available and have any research behind them. While NAMI Minnesota provides education to middle and high school students – reaching over 9,000 students last year - there isn't really any curricula that could be given to schools to carry out.

We support this bill to begin moving in the right direction. State standards will make it easier to develop curricula. Our students need good information to identify symptoms in themselves and others and to know what steps to take.

Thank you for your attention to this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sue Abderholden".

Sue Abderholden, MPH  
Executive Director



1919 University Ave. W., Suite 400, St. Paul, MN 55104  
651-645-2948 | 1-888-NAMI-HELPS | [www.namimn.org](http://www.namimn.org)



**March 12, 2024**

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*Via Electronic Delivery*



**Minnesota Youth**

**Activist Alliance**

a project of Advocates for Youth

**Re: Letter in Support of House File 3682**

Chair Pryor and Members of the Education Policy Committee:

The Minnesota Youth Activist Alliance submits this letter to express our support for House File 3682. We are writing on behalf of Advocates for Youth, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that partners with youth leaders, adult allies, and youth-serving organizations to advocate for policies and champion programs that recognize young people's rights to honest sexual health information; accessible, confidential, and affordable sexual health services; and the resources and opportunities necessary to create sexual health equity for all youth. The Minnesota Youth Activist Alliance is a project of Advocates for Youth, led by young people between the ages of 14 and 24 committed to the fight for reproductive freedoms in Minnesota.

House File 3682 would designate the commissioner of education to begin the rulemaking process to adopt statewide academic standards in health. The establishment of such standards would take actionable steps toward ensuring that all Minnesotans are equipped with the knowledge and skills to attain their highest level of health. Furthermore, these standards aim to center the wellbeing of young people and provide the necessary tools for them to exercise their bodily autonomy and make informed decisions regarding their health and well-being.

Young people are at risk of continued health hazards such as disease, psychological stressors, substance misuse, violence, and more without these standards. In addition, health disparities persist among youth who are LGBTQ+ and/or from communities of color. As LGBTQ youth ourselves, we know first hand that when queer and transgender students don't have access to inclusive education, it can be damaging for their mental health. We learned that from our conversations with peers, many of us had to seek out health information and support from other places because it was not taught to us in school. It is clear that the current lack of health standards in Minnesota has affected how we lead our lives today. But we have the opportunity to change this - the development of these standards through House File 3682 will create a state where young Minnesotans can live freely and safely.

As a youth-and-student-led organization, we understand that establishing statewide health standards will empower the youth of Minnesota to lead safer and healthier lives and have long-term benefits in communities across the state. The Minnesota Youth Activist Alliance respectfully requests your support for House File 3682.

In Community,  
Tori Westenberg  
Yamalí Rodas Figueroa  
Lead Organizers, Minnesota Youth Activist Alliance

February 22, 2024

Chairs Kunesh and Koytza-Witthuhn,

I am writing on behalf of RHA (Reproductive Health Alliance), in support of the Health Standards Bill (SF 3746/HF 3682).

RHA is a coalition of more than 40 reproductive and sexual health clinics, advocacy organizations and individuals across the state of Minnesota. Our clinics are designated as essential community providers by the Minnesota Department of Health. We provide affordable access to medical care including contraception, HIV and STI testing and treatment and evidence based information to the most vulnerable populations across the state.

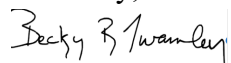
We support comprehensive health education standards. In fact, one of our strategic priorities for 2024 is to foster messaging around medically accurate, evidence-based health information.

Comprehensive health education standards are important to reproductive and sexual health work, ultimately aiding students in making informed choices about their health and well-being. The lack of a requirement to provide comprehensive, medically accurate sexual and reproductive health education has had dire consequences for youth and young adults in our communities. At a time when all of MN is seeing a continued epidemic of chlamydia, and resurgence of syphilis and gonorrhea, youth account for a disproportionate number of cases (6.5% of population making up 24% of chlamydia cases and 14% of gonorrhea).<sup>1</sup>

The 2023 legislative increase in funding and change in language to the SRHS grant (Sexual and Reproductive Health Services, formerly FPSP) allows RHA clinics, including school-based clinics, to provide medically accurate education in K-12 schools in MN.

Revised health education standards that include evidence-based health information are critical to helping Minnesota students strengthen their health literacy skills. We support SF 3746/HF 3682.

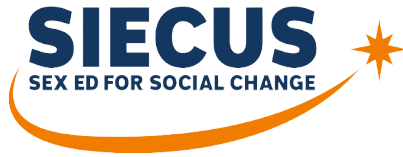
Sincerely,



Becky R. Twamley, RPh, MPS  
Board co-Chair, RHA

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<sup>1</sup> . MDH, STD and HIV/AIDS Surveillance System. Surveillance Statistics 2021



March 12, 2024

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**Re: Letter in Support of House File 3682**

Chair Pryor and Members of the Education Policy Committee:

SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change submits this letter to express our strong support for Minnesota House File 3682. SIECUS is a national nonprofit based in Washington DC that strives to advance quality sex education through advocacy, policy, and coalition building. This letter is being submitted on behalf of our organization by our State Policy Action Manager who has had the privilege to work closely with the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA). We are confident in the collective knowledge and expertise of the professionals that this coalition comprises and we stand united in their efforts to ensure that Minnesota's health standards are developed, updated, and implemented.

Today, we are writing in support of House File 3682, which would designate the commissioner of education to begin the rulemaking process to adopt statewide academic standards in health. Currently, Minnesota does require schools to teach sex education<sup>1</sup>. However, that is not enough. There are no standardized rules that ensure all Minnesota's students are provided accurate instruction on vital health topics such as sexually transmitted infections, mental health, healthy relationships, and violence prevention. We believe that the establishment of such standards would take actionable steps toward ensuring that all Minnesotans are equipped with the knowledge and skills to attain their highest level of health.

I am concerned about what will happen if students continue to lack this education. Our team believes that this bill and the subsequent rulemaking process will positively impact

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<sup>1</sup> [Minnesota State Profile - SIECUS](#)



young Minnesotans by equipping them with the knowledge and tools to make healthy and informed decisions regarding their bodies and relationships.

As a national organization most well known for our role in the development of the National Sex Ed Standards<sup>2</sup>, we understand that quality health education allows a place for young people to practice the communication, decision-making, and negotiation skills they need to create healthy relationships—both sexual and nonsexual—throughout their lives. **We at SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change urge you to Support House File 3682.**

Thank you for your time and dedication to serving your community. I appreciate your commitment to making informed decisions that positively impact the lives of Minnesota residents.

Sincerely,

Miranda Estes, LMSW  
State Policy Action Manager  
SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change

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<sup>2</sup> [National Sex Education Standards. Second Edition](#)



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**Re: Letter in Support of House File 3682**

Chair Pryor and Members of the Education Policy Committee:

Standpoint submits this letter to express our support for House File 3682. Standpoint, formerly known as the Battered Women's Legal Advocacy Project (BWLAP) is a statewide organization whose mission is to promote justice for domestic and sexual violence victims. We provide limited direct representation, legal information, training, and litigation support on program and legal issues.

Today, we are writing in support of House File 3682, which would designate the commissioner of education to begin the rulemaking process to adopt statewide academic standards in health. The establishment of such standards would take actionable steps toward ensuring that all Minnesotans are equipped with the knowledge and skills to attain their highest level of health. Furthermore, these standards aim to center the wellbeing of young people and provide the necessary tools to make informed decisions and positive impacts on themselves and their peers throughout their lifespan.

Young people are at risk of continued health hazards such as disease, psychological stressors, substance misuse, violence, and more without these standards. A holistic approach to health education is essential to preventing harm and creating safer and thriving communities across the state of Minnesota. The development of these standards further builds a Minnesota that upholds our reputation for being a national leader in education.

As a legal organization with a focus on harm reduction, establishing statewide health standards will empower the youth of Minnesota to live safer and healthier lives and have long-term benefits in communities across the state. Standpoint respectfully requests your support for House File 3682.

In Community,

Sam Irvin  
Legal Advocate, Standpoint