

SHB 1855  
Testimony 2/15/07  
Sherry S. Marlin

Good afternoon Madame Chair and members of the committee. I am here today to speak in support of SHB 1855 Regarding Sex Education in School. Yesterday I spoke on behalf of the WSPTA in the Senate Education Committee regarding medically accurate health education; today I am speaking as a parent and grandparent.

I am fortunate to have raised my children in a school district that can afford, and uses a well rounded curriculum to teach sex education that includes not only abstinence, but the skills students need to say no, or to protect themselves as best as possible when they say yes. In our home we speak very comfortably about sexuality, so combined with the public school education, their knowledge was well rounded.

My son Micheal was always careful in his relationships, choosing to limit his partners and practice safer sex. It was not until he reached his early 20s and became addicted to drugs that he became less responsible. Although he became clean several years later, it was too late for him, he had already become HIV positive. I was naïve and didn't think this could ever become a possibility as my children helped me care for their father as he slowly died over a three year period from AIDS.

There are many things that can result from unprotected sex, unintended pregnancies, and sexually transmitted diseases. I was a teen mother myself at the age of sixteen, the last grade of school I completed was the ninth grade, although I went on to receive my G.E.D. , I lived in poverty through most of my adult years, but I've had a happy life. I know it is a hardship, but not insurmountable. Sexually transmitted diseases left untreated can result in infertility, but this too can be lived with, no matter how emotionally painful.

At the age of 27, shortly after my son found out he was getting ill because he now had AIDS, he committed suicide. With HIV as with suicide, there are no take backs, there are no second chances. Thank you for considering this bill and for listening.