May 18, 2021

The Honorable Barbara Lee 2470 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Alma Adams 2436 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 The Honorable Cory Booker 717 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mazie Hirono 109 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Lee, Representative Adams, Senator Booker, and Senator Hirono:

As organizations committed to building a world where every young person has access to high quality, evidence-informed, medically accurate, and complete sex education that meets their needs, we write to you in support of the Real Education and Access for Healthy Youth Act (REAHYA). This bill would make needed investments in inclusive and honest sex education programs and create linkages to sexual health services for young people who face the greatest barriers to information and access to care.

For many of these young people, a lack of comprehensive in scope, confidential, equitable, and accessible sex education and sexual health services is not unfamiliar, but rather a longstanding manifestation of white supremacy, which has touched every aspect of our history, culture, and institutions, including the education and healthcare systems. We commend this legislation for its focus on reproductive justice and equity and believe that sexual health education that is comprehensive in scope is a crucial component of dismantling these systems of oppression.

We know there is a gap between the sexual health information that many young people receiveif any information at all--and what they need and deserve, based on expert standards. Twentynine states and the District of Columbia mandate sex education and 15 states do not require sex education or HIV/STI instruction to be age-appropriate, medically accurate, culturally responsive, or are evidence-based or evidence-informed.¹ In fact, nine states explicitly require instruction that discriminates against LGBTQ+ people.² Furthermore, Black young people are more likely to receive abstinence-only instruction.³ Research shows that abstinence-only instruction, also known as "sexual risk avoidance" instruction, is ineffective in comparison to sex education.

¹ SIECUS (November 2020). <u>https://siecus.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/SIECUS-Sex-Ed-State-Law-and-Policy-Chart.pdf</u>

² SIECUS (November 2020). <u>https://siecus.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/SIECUS-Sex-Ed-State-Law-and-Policy-Chart.pdf</u>

³ Kuehnel, S. S. (2009). Abstinence-Only Education Fails African-American Youth, 86 WASH. U. L. REV. 1241. Retrieved from

https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1136&context=law_l awreview

Our organizations strongly support this bill and the investments it makes to support high quality sexual health education and funding for linkages to clinical care that is confidential, culturally responsive, and meets the needs of all young people. Everyone--no matter who they are or where they live--deserves the information and care they need to achieve their goals and live their lives on their terms. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth AIDS Alabama AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families AIDS Foundation Chicago The AIDS Institute American Academy of HIV Medicine American Atheists American Humanist Association American Public Health Association American Sexual Health Association The American Society for Reproductive Medicine APLA Health Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health Aunt Rita's Foundation Black AIDS Institute **Cascade AIDS Project** Catholics for Choice Center for Biological Diversity Center for Disability Rights Center for LGBTQ Economic Advancement & Research (CLEAR) Center for Reproductive Rights Colorado Organizations and Individuals Responding to HIV/AIDS (CORA) Desiree Alliance Equality California EyesOpenIowa Fact Forward Girls Inc. Girls Inc. NH Girls Inc. of Alameda County Girls Inc. of Bay County Girls Inc. of Carpinteria Girls Inc. of Chicago Girls Inc. of Greater Houston Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara Girls Inc. of Long Island Girls Inc. of Memphis

Girls Inc. of Metro Denver Girls Inc. of Orange County Girls Inc. of San Antonio Girls Inc. of the Island City Girls Inc. of the Valley Girls Inc. of Wayne County Girls Incorporated of Kingsport Girls Incorporated of Sioux City Girls Incorporated of Washington County MD Gladys Allen Brigham Community Center/Girls Inc. of the Berkshires **Guttmacher Institute** Health Connected Healthy Teen Network HIV + Hepatitis Policy Institute Human Rights Watch In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth International Association of Providers of AIDS Care lpas Jewish Women International Lambda Legal Mazzoni Center Medical Students for Choice Michigan Organization on Adolescent Sexual Health (MOASH) Modern Military Association of America NARAL Pro-Choice America NASTAD National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF) National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network National Center for Transgender Equality National Coalition of STD Directors National Council of Jewish Women National Equality Action Team (NEAT) National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association National Health Law Program National Institute for Reproductive Health National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund National Network of Abortion Funds National Organization for Women National Partnership for Women & Families National Working Positive Coalition North Carolina AIDS Action Network one-n-ten People For the American Way

PFLAG National

Physicians for Reproductive Health

Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Population Institute

Positive Women's Network-USA

Power to Decide

Prevention Access Campaign

Reframe Health and Justice

Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

Reproductive Health Access Project

RISE: Healthy for Life

SHAPE America

SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change

Silver State Equality-Nevada

Southwest Center

Teen Health Mississippi

Treatment Action Group

Union for Reform Judaism

URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity

Whitman-Walker Institute

Women of Reform Judaism

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