

# montana public health association

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HB 596  
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February 18, 2009

Representative Arlene Becker, Chair  
Human Services Committee

Dear Chairperson Becker:

The Montana Public Health Association (MPHA) is pleased to submit a letter of support for House Bill 596. MPHA is an organization with a diverse membership, which includes public health workers as well as partners from other professions; MPHA promotes public health practice and policies in Montana.

HB 596 would provide youth critical information about contraception and prevention in the era of HIV. Without this information we are placing their health and lives in jeopardy.

The reality is that young people, who watch highly sexualized images on TV and movies, need and deserve honest and accurate information about abstinence and contraception. This approach is supported by the AMA, the ANA and the NIH along with 100 other medical and professional organizations. Information is not permission.

Instead of fear, denial and blame, we need to try rights, respect and responsibility.

Young people have a right to accurate and complete information. Undermining people's confidence in the effectiveness of contraceptives, including condoms, threatens their health and lives.

Young people deserve respect. Too often they are viewed solely as part of the problem when we should include them as part of the solution.

Finally, young people have an obligation to act responsibly, to make safe and sound decisions about their sexuality.

Young people and unmarried people of all ages are having sex. If we give young people the tools, more and more, they will make safe and responsible decisions. Now more than ever, young people need a strong abstinence and contraception message, with accurate information that will protect their health and save their lives.

We'd like to thank Representative Teresa Henry for bringing this important legislation forward and we'd strongly encourage your support HB 596.

Sincerely,

*Lora Wier*

Lora Wier, Chairman  
MPHA Advocacy and Policy Committee

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# AMPHO

Association of Montana Public Health Officials



Public Health  
Prevention • Promotion • Protection

February 18, 2009

To: Representative Arlene Becker, Chair, Health and Human Services Committee

From: Melanie Reynolds, Association of Montana Public Health Officials (AMPHO)

I am pleased to provide this letter of support today for House Bill 596 on behalf of the Association of Montana Public Health Officials (AMPHO). AMPHO is an organization composed of the directors of local public health departments from across the state. We support this bill because it endorses evidence-based, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education programs.

In the National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO) Resolution #0413 on comprehensive sexual and reproductive health, it states that health officials throughout the country strongly support States and local school districts adopting comprehensive and age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health promotion and education, including condom availability programs in schools. NACCHO also supports sexual and reproductive health promotion and education policy and funding mechanisms that are flexible and allow for multifaceted and linguistically and culturally appropriate programs that address the needs of the populations served.

Our local health departments see the results of a lack of comprehensive, evidence-based sexuality education with the high number of teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases in our teen populations in Montana. We urge your support of HB 596 and thank Representative Henry for bringing this important legislation forward.