

Testimony to the Committee on Health  
For the Public Oversight Roundtable on Youth Perspectives of District Health Programs

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Good afternoon. My name is Tanika Rainey, and I am 18 years old. I am a graduating junior at Cardozo High School. I work at the Young Women's Project as a member of the Youth Staff. Thank you for hearing my testimony. During the summer, I trained youth on comprehensive sex education by going out into the community and teaching about healthy relationships. I am devoting my time and energy to the issue because I like think having healthy relationships is an important foundation to being able to make good sexual health decisions.

My summer experience was every good because I learned a lot of things. I learned how to build a healthy relationship. And I also learned how to teach people on gender. During one of my sessions, some of the kids caught my attention. When I asked, "do you think that after a date, a girl should give you something in return?" A 12-year old boy replied, saying, "No, because you should respect a young lady for who she is, not what she has got or what you want." This showed me that by us coming to this session and teaching about healthy relationships and gender, we had an impact on little kids. We were able to teach them ways to keep their relationships on good terms and show respect to each other. This is important because by informing other young people, we can spread more information. We know we are making an impact because we are trying to change behaviors for the next generation so they can have better lives, better relationships, and more happiness.

It is important to include lessons on gender and healthy relationships in comprehensive sex education in schools because it informs the teens that there is a better way to have communication and less relationship violence. Right now we don't include relationships in our health instruction. We must provide a space for teens to learn and talk about their wants and needs in relationships so that they can be confident, gain respect, find their voices, and know their standards. Councilmember Catania, I have learned through my experience as a trainer that gender and healthy relationships really play a big part in being a happy teen because it takes a lot of stress off of growing up. And it also makes me feel like a better person. Because I am taking the time out to make sure that there are more teens out here like us that are aware of what we are doing.