

**Testimony to the Committee on Health
For the Oversight Hearing on the Department of Health**

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Good afternoon Chairman Catania and Committee Members. My name is Bryerra Moore. I am 17 years old and I'm currently a senior at Calvin Coolidge SHS. For the past two years, I've been a youth staff member at the Young Women's project working as a trainer for PHASE- the Peer Health and Sexuality Education as an educator and advocate. PHASE is a teen-adult partnership that, since 2005, has sought to expand comprehensive sexuality education in DC public and charter schools through curricula development, delivery and advocacy; improve access to services through teen-led campaigns; and build a network of teen peer educator-advocates equipped to promote their peers' sexual and reproductive health.

I am a teen in school who has a daughter, spending my days talking to people about sexual reproductive health. PHASE is an organization that inspires teen women and men to be leaders as well as bettering our lives and ourselves. As part of my PHASE work, I do research, educate teen women and men on reproductive health issues, and work on collaborative projects with groups like STICC and Advocates for Youth. We also run sex education tables – called 101 education -- during our lunches at Coolidge and Wilson. Students would come up and ask questions from us and some of the questions were really important like where to get condoms, where to get STI testing and questions regarding abortion. I would say that I've spent 200 hours doing all of this. Last year we worked with a lot of organizations.

I have been working with YWP since my 10th grade year. Over these years I've grown to have a passion for educating and informing my peers and other teens in my community on the knowledge . I am a trainer because at one point and time I wasn't educated just like the rest, and I'm dealing with the consequences now. Before getting involved with YWP, I got pregnant and on December 8, 2009 I gave birth to an angel from heaven, my daughter Bry'Niya Renee' Jones. I made a mistake that I learned from and I share my story to my peers to let them know that this is reality. Now that I am a mother, I have maternal feelings and I want to see people know the truth about being a teen mom and that it's not like on MTV's 16 and Pregnant.

There are two issues that I would like to talk with the Committee today: 1) sex education and 2) STIs among DC teens.

As far as sex education goes --- we need it, we don't have it, and we don't know when we are going to start getting it. Sex Education is important because we need to protect ourselves and lower rates so sex education is the only way to know how to not get pregnant and to protect ourselves. CSE would make a difference because if people know about their bodies and what diseases do to their bodies then they don't see it as a life threatening thing or an activity that can get a girl pregnant. Teens want to know what the difference between birth control and abortion is. Some teen women think that Plan B

(emergency birth control) is something you take to have an abortion and it's not. Teen girls don't know what their period is! They don't know that a woman can get pregnant during ovulation. This is why we need Comprehensive Sex Education.

I'd like to share a quote from DCMR 2305 on Human Sexuality and Reproductive (published at 26 DCR on October 5, 1979)—way before I was born. The law states that “The DC Public Schools... should offer as part of the regular curriculum instruction in human sexuality and reproductive health which shall include, but not be limited to: information on human anatomy, physical changes during adolescence, menstruation, intercourse, pregnancy, child birth, lactation, venereal disease, contraception, abortion, homosexuality, reduction of infant mortality, impertinent of pregnancy outcomes, and awareness and prevention of rape and other sexual offences, personal decision making in parenting and sexuality.”

This is a good law. Someone had the good sense in 1979 to pass it. It would make a huge difference in the lives of youth. Let's start following the law.

STIs: I would like to inform my council and the world about a big issue we are having now days, the STI rates from our teens: Why are the STI rates so high here? The District of Columbia has very high rates of teen pregnancy, AIDS, and STIs. We are the third highest teen STI rate in the country. (I took out the stats because I was not sure if they were teen rates and they need to be presented in a more digestible format if you are going to include them).

The HAFSTA observation needs work. Its very very important to be precise because this is very damaging information to them and so we can't be murky about it. it has to be clear. Accurate. Observable. Please describe the HAFSTA testing as if you were observing it...observation first, opinion second....please include these things in this paragraph:

1 sentence on the hafsta sti testing program

A couple sentences on what exactly happened at Coolidge (for example....HAFSTA came in october. We had an assembly. We peed in bags. Two weeks later – there was an announcement and names were called...something like that... You can only report the stuff you observed directly --- otherwise you need to attribute it to a friend or someone who was in the room.

The STI testing that HAFSTA is doing has embarrassed teens and put them at risk of peer harassment. HAFSTA only cared about detecting it but not preventing it. They came to our school and they wanted everyone to take the test. It felt more like a research thing because there was no counseling. Then one day they called students on the intercom, about 20 kids, to report to the office. They all went into the same room and told everyone they had it. And then people started posting on their Facebook pages about who was “burning” which means you have something.

Last year, as part of PHASE, I worked with other teen women to implement the Condom Availability Campaign at three schools (Wilson, Coolidge, Chavez). We went into a couple DC public schools and One Charter school to inform our peers that they can receive up to 10 condoms a visit at your school nurse office (as the current Condom Availability Policy states). Last year we posted up flyers

and to let people know that they could get condoms from the nurse. And we did a survey about conformability of where teens get condoms like “where would you feel comfortable getting condoms.” We put this on Facebook and then Survey Monkey. We need to stick to the survey findings here and I don’t think this is what the survey findings said. Christina...please look at the survey findings. It should be in our survey monkey director. Teen didn’t want to get condoms from the nurses because they didn’t want to be judged by the nurse’s and that they nurses were mean. And that it was public place and we don’t want everyone in our business.

In one year of education work – we more than doubled the condom usage rate in two schools (include stats from Wilson and Coolidge in report). Condoms are important to my peers and I because they are the most affordable contraception method there is right now and they really can determine whether we live or die. Sex is just that serious now.

The need for free reproductive health services and contraception: Although condoms are important, condoms aren’t as safe as they seem, “they pop”, “the tear”, “they hurt”. This is what I hear from my peers everyday. And for that reason, is why other contraceptive and barrier methods were created to have a choice of what to use, what’s best for you. But most teens don’t even know about those. Teens need to be able to get a full range of contraception choices for free or low cost.

Without peer educators, I really wonder who else our teens will get the information from. I recommend that there should be CSE to educate our teens. I also recommend that there should be some way where teens can afford these contraceptive methods. I’m sitting here today because I care and I would love to see and know that my peers are safe and comfortable. I don’t think any teen should have to struggle with getting reproductive care when DC supposes to help provide assistance just for that.