

**Testimony to the Committee on Health and Human Services  
For the Budget Oversight Hearing on the Department of Health**

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Hello Chairwoman Alexander and other Committee members. My name is Cindy Mayen, I live in Ward 4 and I am in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade at Roosevelt High School where I play softball. I also play guitar in my free time. I just became a Peer Educator at The Young Women's Project.

When I was a student at Bell Multicultural, I took health class. The class I was pretty brief. It felt kind of just like a class that you just want to pass, not really one you are focused in because of the way it was taught. I did not feel like what I was learning was important for my daily life. I learned about the male and female reproductive systems in health, but I didn't learn about things that would be important, like how to prevent pregnancy.

I didn't really get much sexual health information from my parents either. In a way, I'm okay with that because it'd be awkward to ask my parents about sex. I was basically just told to be abstinent and to keep a monogamous relationship with one person. Now, the only advice I get is to use condoms or birth control if I'm going to do it. There are pros and cons when getting information from your parents-- it depends what kind of parents you have. My friends get more information from health class or programs like YWP, than they do from parents. Now that I am a peer educator, my friends can get this information from me.

Peer Educators, like us, teach teens what a health class and our parents don't. We help our closest friends and people we think need to know about sexual health and others who are open and interested about it. Youth don't always have the information they need before they start having sex. Part of the reason is that youth aren't prepared because they don't know how to be safe and healthy. This is where peer educators come in show them how to be safe in the moment, and about consequences for their future.

I haven't heard of any of my friends taking health in the school I attend now, there may be a teacher but I don't know who it is. There was an assembly once about getting tested for STI's and how to prevent them. But youth still aren't informed enough they don't really know about contraception they don't know that you can still get STI's if you are on birth control and its important. As peer educators we can remind them that you should also use condoms if you are on birth control. We can let them know about the different kinds of contraception.

Like doctors, dentists, and teachers are helping people, we are helping people too. Why shouldn't we get paid for it too. It's a chance to get job experience when other jobs don't want to hire you. Every job wants job experience, but how am I supposed to get experience if you won't hire me. A job also gives motivation. My first job was with SYEP. I was in a modeling camp. My second job was with SYEP playing the saxophone with the marching band. Then, I worked with LAYC. When I try to apply for new jobs, like Chipotle, it's hard to say that I was part of a program where I played the Saxophone because that is not what they are looking for. Now that I work for YWP I can say that I have great communicating skills. Getting paid is our "thank you" from the DOH for informing others on how to stay healthy. A paid job doesn't just benefit me, but everyone in my community.

That's why I'm asking you to continue to help us by allocating funding for our stipends. We are doing important work, and I hope the DOH and you find it important enough to fund it.

Thank you.