

**Testimony to the Committee on Health
For the Public Oversight Roundtable on Youth Perspectives of District Health Programs
Why We Need a Comprehensive Sexual Health Plan**

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October 27, 2011**

Hello again! My name is Derrica Vines; I am 16 years old, and a junior at Woodrow Wilson SHS. I am a part of the youth-staff at the Young Women's project under the PHASE-Peer Health and Sexuality Education campaign. I am part of the Youth Health Assessment team.

The Youth Assessment research we did this summer helped us to connect the dots about what is going on in the community with youth sexual health and the connections between community based and governmental programs. We learned that there are innovative government and community programs – but we lack coordination and a shared sense of outcomes. We also lack data that helps us understand what's happening and what kind of impact we are having. If we can improve this – we think we have a better chance of improving sexual health outcomes for DC youth.

One of the research areas that I looked into is how states are coordinating their efforts on youth sexual health. I learned that some states who have confronted similar problems have worked to develop a comprehensive youth sexual health strategy and plan. The ones I liked best were Delaware, Oregon, Washington State, and Whales. In these states, Departments of Health, in conjunction with youth and community groups developed Youth Sexual Health Plans with overarching goals, action plans highlighting key players and stakeholders, and long-term and short term benchmarks. The plans we reviewed can definitely serve as models, but there is plenty of room to create a plan that is specific to the needs of our community. The 2009 Youth Framework is a great foundational piece, and can be used as a reference in our efforts. A plan will only serve to foster the growth of our already successful programs, and will provide support for those initiatives that are still developing or in transition.

Councilmember Catania and members of the Committee, we are doing excellent work, but we lack the coordination necessary to make substantial, long-term change in our community. I believe that creating a plan will create a new level of accountability for all of us and will provide an opportunity for us to become a model for other communities facing similar situations. Thank you for your support.