

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

**Imani Christian
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Hello Chairwoman Alexander and other Committee members. My name is Imani Christian, I am in the 12th grade at H.D. Woodson Senior High School, and I live in ward 7. After I graduate I would like to go to college at Virginia State University and major in Animal Science. Last Fall, I became a Peer Educator at The Young Women's Project (YWP).

I am lucky because my parents did talk to me about sexual health. They talked to me about how important condoms were and how bad STIs are. They also told me to them if I start having sex, so I could get on birth control. Even though don't feel completely comfortable talking to my parents about sex, I will go to them if I have to. This is important because my sexual health education at school is not the best. I have learned more with YWP. It has been a while since I took health. I took health my ninth grade year. Even in health class, we don't talk about sex as much as we should. A lot of the information that I was taught at YWP is not offered in the current DCPS health curriculum.

Because of the poor sex education we receive in schools, my peers don't know how birth control works. They told me that all birth control is not reliable because they don't know how it works. Some don't understand that there are still a lot of risks that come with oral sex. Most of the sexually active teens I know don't even know the first step in using condoms, which is sad.

I think peer education is important in my school because we give information to our peers about sex and tell them what they need to do to stay STI-free and where to go to get tested, treated, and get birth control. It's so important because we don't have a good health education.

Paying peer educators makes us feel like employees and like our work is important. We need money- it keeps us motivated. If someone pays us for our work, we know that they are serious about it.

My school should use peer educators more, and they should also upgrade the DCPS health curriculum course, and not offer the course just once, since we need to learn health as we grow up.

If you agree with me, please support setting aside money in the DOH budget for peer educator stipends.

Thank you for listening to my testimony.