

**Testimony of  
Kirsten Hawkins, MD, MPH, FAAP  
Chief, Section of Adolescent Medicine  
Associate Pediatric Clerkship Director  
Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics  
MedStar Georgetown University Hospital**

**Proposed Graduation Requirements  
District of Columbia State Board of Education  
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My name is Dr. Kirsten Hawkins and I am an adolescent medicine specialist practicing in the District of Columbia since 2003. I am the current president of the Chesapeake chapter of the Society of Adolescent Health and Medicine. Our members come from a variety of medical and non-medical disciplines including physicians, nurse practitioners, psychologists, social workers, health educators, and other health professionals committed to improving the physical and psychosocial health and well-being of adolescents. Additionally, I have served as the chair of the committee on Adolescence for the DC chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics since 2006.

Not a day goes by that I do not spend a considerable portion of my office visits explaining basic health concepts to my patients. Whether it's covering principles of anatomy or general nutritional requirements for daily living, my teen patients know very little about their bodies, their health, and what wellness truly is.

In the past month I treated a teen whose newly diagnosed pregnancy came as a surprise since she didn't think she'd really had "sex" yet. As part of routine screening at annual well visits I order urine tests for sexually transmitted infections. Two out of the three tests run this past Friday were positive for Chlamydia. While this is a treatable infection, there are many other infections that are not. Including the recent genital wart diagnosis of a student at a school based health center who had not yet had her HPV immunization that would have reduced her chances of having such an infection by 90%.

Diabetes, hypertension, and obesity related non-alcoholic fatty liver, diseases of middle-aged adults are becoming way too common diagnoses in my pediatric patients.

Increasing access to effective, research driven and carefully evaluated programming, taught by licensed health educators, can only serve to increase the knowledge of our students in the District.

While preparing to talk today I reflected on my own high school health education. I now realize that my school system was quite exceptional in providing annual health education courses in all four years of high school in addition to annual physical education requirements.

There is no reason that the students of the District deserve any less than nationally agreed upon minimum standards for health education. Let us serve as an example for other school systems and pave the way to a healthier population.