

**Testimony to the DC State Board of Education
On the Proposed Graduation Requirements**

**Jonohua Brown, Youth Staff
Young Women's Project**

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Hello. My name is Jonohua Brown and I am a junior at Dunbar Senior High School. I joined the Young Women's Project staff this school year and became a member of the PHASE team. PHASE stands for Peer Health and Sexuality Education.

I am here today because I think that 0.5 credits should be added onto the Health Education graduation requirement. This addition should have an emphasis on sexual health education topics for two main reasons - the high pregnancy rate and the high rate of sexually transmitted diseases. Teens need to be more knowledgeable about sex education to prevent STI's and early and unwanted pregnancies.

I have a friend who caught an STI as a sophomore in high school because she wasn't aware of the different infections, and she did not know the ways to prevent catching an STI. People can get accurate information in school rather than getting information from the internet or peers who also have not had sex education before. Teens spend most of their time at school and it is the best place to teach because youth are there to learn. It is better that we have sex education taught in schools so that the STD and pregnancy rate can be lowered.

DC has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the country. I have another friend who was a sophomore last year and did not recognize the signs of pregnancy. As a result, she did not know that she was pregnant until she was in her sixth month. This is a problem because she was not taking care of herself like she should have. She was not going to the doctor, eating well, or taking the necessary vitamins that she needed to grow a healthy baby. Furthermore, she was not prepared for the baby and had to drop out of school when the baby came. I believe she could have avoided this if she had learned about contraception and safe sex in school. All of this information should be taught in health class so that more teens do not find themselves in the same situation as my friend.

By teaching sex education in schools, teens will probably have a better understanding of what sex really is. That is why I am recommending that you increase health education to one full credit and include an emphasis on sexual health in this increase. Thank you for your time.