



LETICIA CASTILLO

58TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

AB 329: California Healthy Youth Act: adoption.

Background on Sex Ed. Since 1992, California public schools are required to teach HIV/AIDS prevention education in both middle school and high school. Since 2004, California public schools are required to teach comprehensive education¹ based on risk reduction (acceptance) over risk avoidance (abstinence).

Today, the most popular curricula in California are these four:

- *Advocates for Youth curriculum, Rights, Respect, Responsibility*²
- *Be Real. Be Ready. Smart Sexuality Curriculum, Adolescent Health Working Group*³
- *Health Connected Curriculum Teen Talk High School*⁴
- *Positive Prevention Plus*⁵

These courses teach youth about sex and have detailed lessons on how to access and use contraception. They also include extensive coverage of human sexuality, gender identity and orientation, STI/STDs and HIV.

What's Missing: When Contraceptives Fail.

“Risk reduction” acknowledges that sex introduces a risk of pregnancy. Currently, one in four teens gets pregnant before reaching 20 years old. These courses skim over the three pregnancy options: all explain abortion access/resources and abortion rights, only one reviews parenting (the financial aspects) and none that we found explains adoption beyond a brief mention.

Why Options Info is Needed.

Approx. 333,000 California women face unplanned pregnancy each year⁶. In fact, the US has the highest rate of unplanned pregnancy in the Western world and California is no exception.

Adoption is the Forgotten Option.

Most (~95+%) of those facing unplanned pregnancy choose between abortion and (often single) parenting without ever considering adoption. They simply have not learned about it. Many regret their decisions later and wish someone had told them how adoption works today.

Teaching all three options for women facing unplanned pregnancy is relevant and needed, and adoption should be included.

¹ The California Comprehensive Sexual Health Education Act was chaptered into California Education Codes 51930-51939. On January 1, 2016 the California Healthy Youth Act (CHYA) was enacted by the California state legislature, and called for comprehensive education based on risk reduction (acceptance) over risk avoidance (abstinence).

² Used where: Sacramento Unified, San Diego Unified

³ Used where: Fremont Unified, San Francisco Unified, Oakland Unified

⁴ Used where: At least ten school districts across California including San Jose Unified.

⁵ Used where: At least two dozen school districts in California and a few outside of California.

⁶ California 39,538,000 / US population is 332,000,000 x 2,800,000 unplanned pregnancies each year

What this bill will do:

The bill requires instruction added to the California public schools' comprehensive education that includes:

- current adoption practices in the United States,
- information about available adoption resources and,
- as a means of providing for the well-being of a child, information pertaining to the State's Safe Haven act.

Why this is needed:

Standard practices in adoption have changed drastically in the last 25 years, from mostly closed to mostly open⁷. In addition to our youth not understanding the adoption option, most adults also don't know how adoption works in the US. This should be taught in schools.

Future generations should understand their options. Let's include adoption information in our California health & sex education classes. Let's give them another alternative for when they are facing an unplanned pregnancy.

The Course is Available:

Unplanned Good Inc has developed a "drop in module" which can be easily added to any sex ed / health ed curricula.

Financial Impact:

Negligible.

Successful passage.

States have passed this bill already.

Idaho: The Bill was introduced in Jan.2024 in Idaho as S 1308 and passed overwhelmingly. New Hampshire and Oregon are both introducing this bill in their 2025 legislative sessions. We're also hoping to introduce this bill in California in January.

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⁷ We need to teach students that today's **open** adoption standard practices mean that birth parents who choose adoption for their baby are:

- Freed from parental responsibilities,
- Able to choose child's parents with the values they want,
- Able to keep in touch (potential visits, calls, letters),
- Get their questions about the child's well-being are answered,
- Get future updates that help them heal,
- Know the child is loved, which helps w/ closure,
- Stay connected to the family that they helped create.

Often that new extended family is the very best gift that all of them get to experience.