



END AIDS. LIVE LIFE.

MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT
A7496 (Gonzalez-Rojas) / S6901 (Salazar)

Gay Men’s Health Crisis, Inc. (GMHC), the world’s first and leading provider of HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and advocacy strongly supports the passage of **A7496 (Gonzalez-Rojas) / S6901 (Salazar)**; a bill that would amend the education law in regards to comprehensive sexuality education in schools.

This bill aims to provide age-appropriate information about topics surrounding sex and sexuality, including, but not limited to: reproductive and sexual development; consent; bodily autonomy; boundary-setting; bullying; healthy relationships; prevention of intimate partner violence and sexual violence; methods for preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections; gender and gender expression; gender identity; the diversity of sex characteristics and the harms of gender stereotypes; the relationship between substance use and sexual behavior and health; and the use of technology and social media in interpersonal relationships.¹

Comprehensive, age-appropriate sex education has been shown to decrease rates of sexually transmitted infections and homophobia-related bullying, as well as broaden understandings of gender and gender norms and increase knowledge and skills that support healthy relationships.² Youth who do not have access to these programs are put at a disadvantage for negative health outcomes; psychological research shows that comprehensive sex education and HIV prevention programs are effective in reducing high-risk sexual behavior in adolescents.³

As an organization that serves HIV- and AIDS-affected communities, GMHC recognizes the importance of addressing all factors involved in its transmission. Comprehensive sex education not only allows young people to make healthy decisions about their sexual health, but also it introduces them to resources that are medically accurate, evidence-based, and culturally responsive. This type of access is especially important for youth who are a part of historically marginalized communities, such as individuals who are LGBTQ+, Black, Indigenous, or other people of color.

This is especially relevant because the CDC reported that the prevalence of high school students in the U.S. who have ever been tested for HIV has decreased from 12.9% in 2013 to 9.4% in 2019, and in New York, only 16% of high schoolers in 2019 have ever been tested for HIV.⁴

For these reasons and more, GMHC strongly supports and recommends the passage of **AB7496 (Gonzalez-Rojas) / S6901 (Salazar)**.

¹ NY State Senate. “NY State Assembly Bill A4604,” February 17, 2023. <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2023/A4604>.

² Caruso, I., Valdez, E., Lovell, C.C. *et al.* The Need for Community-Responsive and Flexible Sex Ed for Historically Marginalized Youth. *Sex Res Soc Policy* **20**, 94–102 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-022-00717-8>.

³ Apa.org. “Risky Business: Curbing Adolescent Sexual Behaviors with Interventions.” American Psychological Association, 2022. <https://www.apa.org/topics/sex-sexuality/high-risk-behavior-adolescents>.

⁴ Ending the Epidemic. “National Youth HIV/AIDS Awareness Day,” April 13, 2013. <https://etedashboardny.org/national-youth-hiv-aids-awareness-day/>.