



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 716-A

Resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Education to adopt all of the policy recommendations of the Mayor’s Sexual Health Education Task Force and provide comprehensive sexual health education on a regular basis, across all grade levels.

By Council Members Levin, Treyger, Cumbo, Levine, Rivera, Ampry-Samuel, Chin, Ayala, Salamanca, Rosenthal, Koslowitz, Lander, Cohen, Dromm, Powers, Kallos, Louis, Barron and Rose

Whereas, In 2011, the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) made sexual health education a mandatory component of the comprehensive health education courses required in middle and high schools; and

Whereas, Nonetheless, data reveals troubling statistics regarding young people’s access to sexual health education, including a 2017 report released by New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer that showed only 43 percent of eighth graders had completed the one credit, or 54 hours, of health education required by New York State law; and

Whereas, According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, from 2012 to 2016, primary and secondary syphilis cases in New York City increased 31.9 percent among 15- to 19-year-olds and 55.7 percent among 20- to 24-year-olds; and

Whereas, In 2016, nearly 39 percent (882 of 2,279) of new HIV diagnoses in New York City were among 13- to 29-year-olds; and

Whereas, Data from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Health (“DOHMH”) shows that in 2015, eight in 10 pregnancies among 15- to 19-year-olds were unintended; and

Whereas, Recognizing these significant statistics, the New York City Council (“the Council”) passed Local Law 90 of 2017 (“Local Law 90”), sponsored by Council Member Laurie Cumbo, to ensure students get

a comprehensive sexual health education that includes medically-accurate and age-appropriate lessons on sexual health; and

Whereas, Local Law 90 created a Sexual Health Education Task Force (“the Task Force”), responsible for reviewing information about the current recommended sexual health education curricula and the implementation of sexual health education in New York City public schools, as well as issuing a report with findings and recommendations for the improvement and expansion of the curricula and implementation in grades kindergarten through twelve; and

Whereas, The Task Force was comprised of 28 members, including students, educators, parents, a principal, a school psychologist, sexual health education experts, LGBTQ health experts, representatives from DOE, representatives from DOHMH, and representatives from the Council; and

Whereas, The Task Force met over the course of six months, and published its findings and recommendations in July 2018; and

Whereas, The Task Force identified four broad strategies to bolster sexual health education in New York City, which included prioritizing a culture of sexual wellness and inclusivity in all schools; ensuring all students are served by well-equipped and supported health education instructors; improving the content, substance, and methods of sexual health education; and strengthening accountability and reporting; and

Whereas, The Task Force also developed 11 nonbinding recommendations to strengthen student, school, family, and community participation in implementing meaningful, culturally responsive, inclusive, and sustainable sexual health education; and

Whereas, The Task Force recommendations include expanding instruction so that sexual health education lessons covering healthy relationships, sexuality, consent, and bodily autonomy are taught at least once to students in kindergarten through second grade and at least once again in grades three through five; and

Whereas, The recommendations also include avoiding the use of, and actively dismantling, cisnormative, heteronormative, and ethnocentric frameworks; and

Whereas, The recommendations also call for health lessons in all city schools to be delivered by teachers who have received high-quality training in sexual health education, and the Task Force urges DOE to explore adding a required certification for all teachers on inclusivity and consent; and

Whereas, The Task Force report framed sexual health education as an essential element to developing and maintaining healthy relationships throughout life; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York City Department of Education to adopt all of the policy recommendations of the Mayor's Sexual Health Education Task Force and provide comprehensive sexual health education on a regular basis, across all grade levels.

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BG/KJ
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