



# Sex Ed Legislative Mid-Year Report 2024





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# Executive Summary



# Executive Summary

Over the past three years in a post-Dobbs America, when Roe v Wade fell, sex education advocates have confronted an onslaught of attacks on sexual and reproductive health freedoms – including inclusive and affirming sexual health education for young people. In the 2024 legislative session, SIECUS observed a continuation of these efforts. These attacks range from restrictions on abortion to contraceptive access being obstructed to being discriminated against for ones' identity in the classroom, in the healthcare system, and in other institutions. While these attacks have been large in magnitude, their actual impact and success have been limited. **Only 43 restrictive bills were enacted into law out of the over 450 introduced, a success rate of just 9%.** This rate is a decrease from the 13% success rate at the midpoint of 2023.<sup>1</sup> This is because time and time again **Americans continue to show widespread support for honest and comprehensive education** that prepares young people for optimal, lifelong health and well-being.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, advocates for reproductive freedoms did not let this hinder their progress; passing many progressive bills, supporting pro-choice ballot measures, and making the case for sex education at the national, state, and local levels. In fact, advocates passed **27 progressive laws**, of which **7 advanced sex education**, and initiated the process to get constitutional measures protecting abortion on the ballot in 9 states<sup>3</sup>, riding on the success in Ohio last year.<sup>4</sup>

Still, opposition lawmakers used the 2024 legislative sessions as an opportunity to craft unique legislation that would damage the integrity of sex education by warping it to fit their own biased agenda. This includes the efforts to pass state laws requiring the viewing of fetal ultrasound videos in sex education classrooms, also known as the “Baby Olivia” bills, which unfortunately saw success in Tennessee, but otherwise failed in the rest of the country.

## Baby Olivia Bills 2023 vs 2024



2023

▼ 3



2024

▼ 15



Further, this session saw a **60% increase in bills trying to villainize abortion** as compared to last year. These efforts included trying to force teaching adoption as the only viable alternative to an unplanned pregnancy within the health education curriculum or requiring biased instruction in fetal development. These types of legislation are reflective of a larger campaign by conservative policymakers to push America back to a time when reproductive rights were nonexistent, abortion access and the use of contraception were increasingly stigmatized, and sexuality was considered shameful, especially for women, and was, as a result disregarded.

These developments are disconcerting, to say the least, considering America continues to fall behind globally on several sexual and reproductive health indicators. While teen birth rates have declined in recent years, with the help of advancements in sex education<sup>5</sup>, increased use of birth control, and teens delaying initiation of sex, the United States still has the highest rates of teen births compared to other high-income nations as well as disparities from state to state.<sup>6</sup> For example, in 2022, the teen birth rate in Texas increased for the first time in 15 years after the passage of their six-week abortion ban.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “2023 State Legislative Mid-Year Report,” SIECUS, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> “What U.S. Parents Think About Sex Ed in Schools,” Planned Parenthood, 2023.

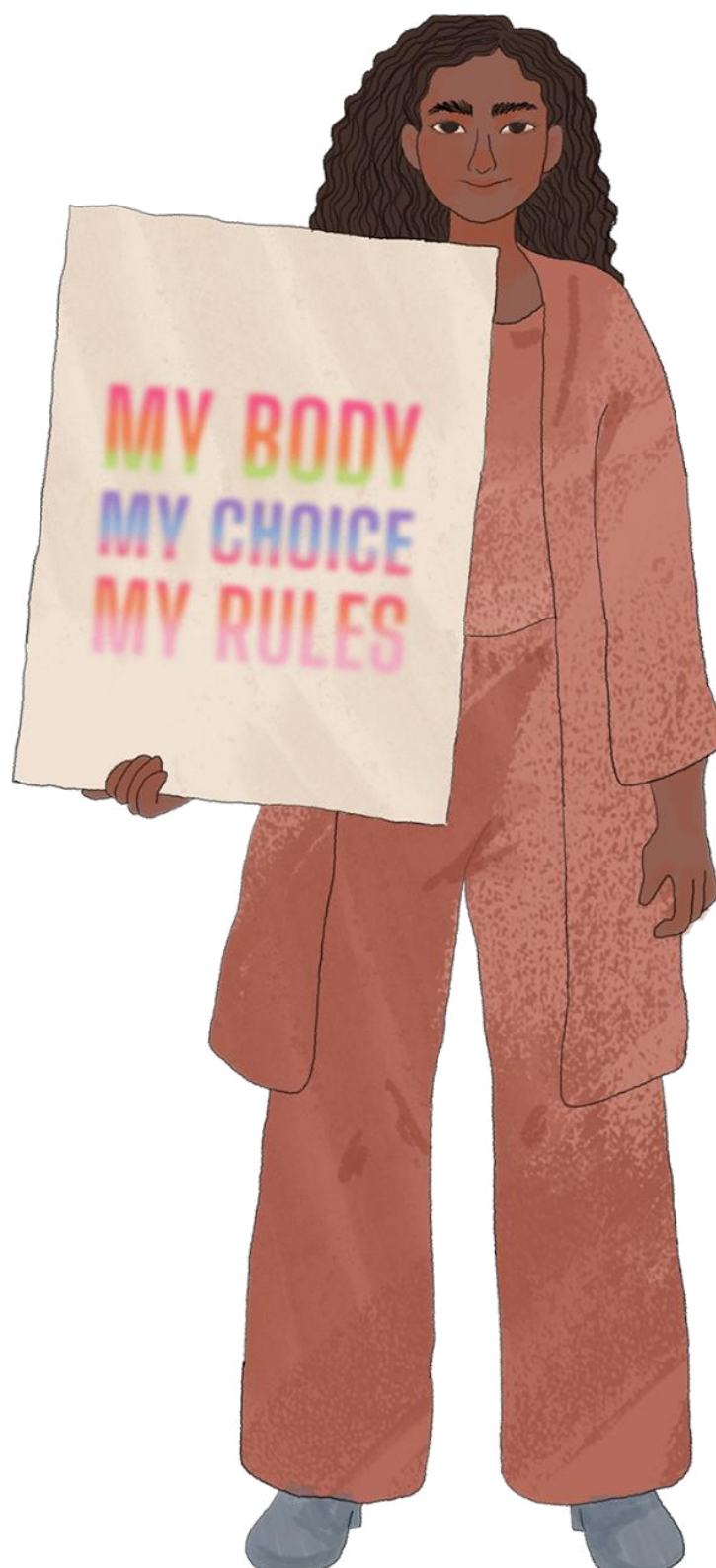
<sup>3</sup> “Ballot Tracker: Status of Abortion-Related State Constitutional Amendment Measures for the 2024 Election,” KFF, July 15, 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Julie Smyth, “Ohio voters enshrine abortion access in constitution in latest statewide win for reproductive rights,” AP News, November 7, 2023.



Further, the unintended consequences of state-based abortion bans continue to ripple out. For example, America continues to fail on maternal health indicators with the highest maternal mortality among high-income countries, with Black women facing the highest rates of maternal mortality.<sup>8</sup> There are many reasons for this including a lack of education surrounding reproductive bodies, an analysis of the impact of racial injustice within different systems including the healthcare system, and unplanned teen pregnancy. Meanwhile, the rate of abortion is the highest it's been in a decade, despite increasing bans and the increased risk to people seeking abortion care. This is reflective of many aspects such as states with protected access having to bear a higher load of abortions than states where it's banned. More importantly, however, it shows that there continues to be a great need for access to abortion care and that individuals will continue to need access to this form of care no matter what restrictive measures anti-abortion policy makers take.<sup>9</sup>

Beyond health care services, the larger issue of gender equity continues to present itself in the concerning statistics related to interpersonal violence in the United States. In a 2024 report by the National Domestic Violence Hotline and If/When/How, over 60% of survivors reported being coerced to have sex or engage in sexual activity and 23% reported being pressured to become pregnant by their current or former partner.<sup>10</sup> Further, while rates of sexually transmitted infections (STI) have decreased in the United States, specific infections such as the total number of cases of syphilis have increased by 80% since 2018.<sup>11</sup> Recently, the Centers for Disease Control has reported a rise in STIs among sexually active older adults which could be due to a variety of factors but one significant contributor is a lack of sexual health knowledge.<sup>12</sup>



<sup>5</sup>Nicholas Mark & Lawrence Wu, "More comprehensive sex education reduced teen births: Quasi-experimental evidence," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 119,8 (2022), doi:10.1073/pnas.2113144119

<sup>6</sup>"About Teen Pregnancy," CDC, May 15, 2024.

<sup>7</sup>Bayliss Wagner, "Amid abortion ban, Texas teen birth rate in 2022 increased for first time in 15 years," *Austin-American Statesman*, January 23, 2024.

<sup>8</sup>Munira Z. Gunja, Evan D. Gumas, Relebohile Masitha, Laurie C. Zephyrin, "Insights into the U.S. Maternal Mortality Crisis: An International Comparison," *The Commonwealth Fund*, June 4, 2024.

<sup>9</sup>"Despite Bans, Number of Abortions in the United States Increased in 2023," Issac Maddow-Zimmet and Candace Gibson, *Guttmacher Institute*, May 10, 2024.

<sup>10</sup>"Reproductive Coercion and Abuse Report," *The National Domestic Violence Hotline and If/When/How*, 2024.



In addition to restrictions on reproductive health care access for young people, 2024 was yet another year of innumerable legislative attacks on LGBTQIA+ students. While many bills hostile to the LGBTQIA+ community passed in states, **over half of these anti-LGBTQIA+ bills failed in 2024 compared to past sessions.**<sup>13 14</sup> Indeed, the failure of these efforts and advancements such as the Title IX protections against discrimination for LGBTQIA+ students reflect what advocates and activists on the ground already know: the majority of Americans reject these extremist encroachments on the rights of Americans and lawmakers are finally listening. However, listening does not mean that our opposition has given up. Instead, conservative lawmakers have found a new target in the war on young people and their sexual and reproductive health rights: online censorship. SIECUS tracked **over 70 bills that sought to restrict minors' access to online content** in this legislative session, including access to specific websites that are vaguely defined as "sexually explicit" or "harmful to minors" which could include resources for LGBTQIA+ young people.

Sex education can be a unique upstream approach to address the aforementioned health outcomes associated with healthy sexuality, relationships, pregnancy, and alternatives such as access to abortion, STI prevention, and so much more. We have over 30 years of research to show us that sex education can be a vehicle for societal change including reducing the incidence of intimate partner violence, reducing anti-LGBTQIA+ bullying, improving understanding of gender equity, improving communication skills, and instilling media literacy in young people by instructing on a variety of topics such as anatomy, puberty, violence prevention, healthy relationships, consent, sexual orientation and gender identity, and much more.<sup>15</sup> **2024 has proved to be a record-breaking year for the number of positive sex education bills** introduced. Unfortunately, however, the majority of sex education bills overall sought to restrict access to this life-saving instruction.

Sex education for all is pivotal to ensuring that our future generations can live longer and healthier lives and exist in a thriving and empathetic society that values bodily autonomy, diversity, and progress. As the year continues, the fight for a sex-positive future for all carries on.



<sup>11</sup> Steven Johnson, "The 10 States With the Highest STD Rates," U.S. News, January 31, 2024.

<sup>12</sup> "Rise in STI's Among Adults 55+," Kojo Aurelien, 2024.

<sup>13</sup> "Mapping Attacks on LGBTQ Rights in U.S. State Legislatures in 2024," American Civil Liberties Union, 2024.

<sup>14</sup> "Mapping Attacks on LGBTQ Rights in U.S. State Legislatures in 2023," American Civil Liberties Union, 2023.

<sup>15</sup> Eva Goldfarb & Lisa Lieberman, "Three Decades of Research: The Case for Comprehensive Sex Education," Journal of Adolescent Health, 68, 1, p13-27 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2020.07.036>



# Comparing Sex Education Bills Over The Years





## What does Comprehensive Sex Ed Look Like?



Sex education programs aim to build knowledge and skills in human development, relationships, decision-making, communication, and how to access sexual and reproductive health services. Three decades of research have shown that this form of sex education has the potential to improve physical, emotional, and mental health outcomes for young people. Ideally, according to the National Sex Education Standards (NSES), this education should begin in kindergarten and continue through 12th grade. This education is intended to be age-appropriate, medically accurate, evidence-based, and culturally responsive. Further, instruction also encompasses sexual assault and violence prevention, mental health, sexual behavior, sexual orientation, gender identity, race and ethnicity, and the impact of media and societal norms.

- Additional characteristics of CSE programs according to the NSES include:
- Knowledge and skills that will promote health-enhancing behaviors and decisions
- Instruction on individual and group norms, stereotypes, and beliefs surrounding health behaviors
- Positive reinforcement of healthy attitudes and behaviors and increasing personal perception of risk behaviors
- Strategies that are trauma-informed, culturally responsive, inclusive, sex-positive, and rooted in justice and equity
- Lessons on parent-child communication and parental engagement
- Planning and pedagogical techniques for educators and administrators to facilitate implementation

*These are the values and topic areas used by advocates to advance policies that support the future of America and the human rights of young people in the United States.*

A close-up photograph of a hand pointing upwards with the index finger. The hand is wearing two wristbands: a black one with the word 'PRIDE' in colorful letters and a rainbow-colored one. The background is a bright blue sky with soft, white clouds. The overall tone is positive and celebratory.

# 2024 Legislative Session in Review Where did we land?



In 2024, SIECUS worked tirelessly to monitor, advocate for, and support policies that improve access to sex education, improve inclusion and appreciation of diversity in schools, and empower young people to utilize sexual and reproductive health services in and outside of the school system. SIECUS functions at the federal, state, and occasionally even at the local school district level to advance sex education for all.

## Federal

SIECUS works in the federal sphere to advance sex education across the country through advocacy of fiscal appropriations for adolescent sexual health programming, federal legislation in the form of the Real Education and Access for Healthy Youth Act (REAHYA) and other related bills, and through the endorsement and monitoring of federal rulemaking and Supreme Court decision-making that will impact reproductive freedoms. SIECUS and our coalition partners push for increased funding for the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program (TPPP), CDC's Division of Adolescent School Health (DASH), the Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) and the elimination of harmful "sexual risk avoidance" (abstinence-only) program funding. These federal programs allocate funding for evidence-based adolescent sexual health programs; however, they do not require the curriculum to be aligned with the National Sex Education Standards.

## ***FY 2025 Appropriations Watch***

In the Spring of 2024, President Joe Biden signed into law a series of appropriations bills outlining funding for the remainder of fiscal year 2024. Since then, the President has submitted the budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2025. Currently, appropriations proceedings are underway in the House and Senate committees.

The President's budget included over \$139 million for total federal funding for adolescent sexual health programming through the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program (TPPP), and the CDC's Division of Adolescent School Health (DASH). He also proposed the elimination of harmful "sexual risk avoidance" (abstinence-only) program funding. Included in the President's budget was also additional funding for the Title X Family Planning Program which will ensure young people continue to have access to low-cost and affordable sexual and reproductive health services.

The House Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee recently released their FY25 spending proposal. While there were cuts across most programs, funding related to sexual and reproductive health took a significant hit. The bill proposed the elimination of TPPP and Title X, while also increasing sexual risk avoidance funding. Critical HIV/AIDS funding was also slashed. Additionally, the bill summary issued by the Subcommittee included harmful disinformation about comprehensive sex education falsely claiming that these programs "encourage teenagers as young as 13" to engage in sexual activity, when in fact, decades of research demonstrate that comprehensive sex education not only reduces rates of unwanted teen pregnancy and STI transmission, but also results in delayed sexual initiation.

Thus, the cuts threatening these programs would detrimentally impede the ability of young people to access critical sexual and reproductive healthcare, and would also promote a false narrative about what comprehensive sex education is and what its goals are.





Fortunately, the fight over sex education funding is not over yet. The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education (LHHS), and Related Agencies still have to release their proposal. The House LHHS bill from FY24 had proposed similar cuts, but due to the work of advocates, funding for all of these programs was preserved. While this may not be a year of funding increases, we are still hopeful that at the very least, these programs will be protected through further amendments and advocacy efforts. For more information on Fiscal Year 2024 final amounts and Fiscal Year 2025 proposed numbers, refer to [Addendum Table B](#).

Existing federal appropriations for sex education programming are not enough to support the immense amount of work being done by advocates and educators at the state and local levels. Additional parameters are needed to ensure the quality, accuracy, and comprehensiveness of sex education programs that are eligible for federal grants. Therefore, the need for legislation in the form of the Real Education and Access for Healthy Youth Act (REAHYA) is immediate.

### **REAHYA in 2024**

REAHYA 2023 ([HR 3583/S 1697](#)) was introduced in May of 2023 and, if passed, would create the first-ever federal funding stream for sex education programs that align with the National Sex Education Standards. It would also provide grants that increase youth access to sexual and reproductive health services, especially for marginalized youth. Thus far, there are 13 sponsors in the Senate and 49 sponsors in the House.

In May 2024, in honor of Sex Ed for All Month, SIECUS hosted the annual congressional advocacy day, Sex Ed on the Hill. Participants from approximately 18 states engaged in over 40 Congressional meetings to uplift the cause of sex education and call for the passage of REAHYA alongside increased federal funding of TPPP and DASH. SIECUS continues to engage in federal advocacy in 2024 to garner support for REAHYA and will do so through the projected end of the 118th session of Congress on January 3rd, 2025.

### ***KOSA and Federal Legislation in 2024***

In 2023, Congress introduced the [Kids Online Safety Act \(S. 1409\)](#), or KOSA. This bill, while brought forth as an effort to protect young people on social media and the Internet, in reality, has the potential to limit young people's access to life-saving information, including sex education and resources for LGBTQIA+ youth.<sup>16</sup> [Despite updates to the original bill text](#), SIECUS and our partners at Advocates for Youth continue to oppose KOSA due to its failure to ensure content neutrality, which could allow unscrupulous elected officials to attempt to enact online censorship of digital sexual health information and education content under the ongoing guise of labeling sex education as “sexually explicit”.<sup>17</sup> Instead, we believe that sex education serves an important role in helping young people develop internet safety as it includes instruction on safe social media practices and thoughtful consumption of media, and helps young people understand the realities and dangers associated with consuming porn under the age of 18 as outlined in the [National Sex Education Standards](#).<sup>18</sup> Further, sex education can also address the current mental health crisis young people are facing by [bridging the physical and emotional health](#).<sup>19</sup>

Beyond KOSA, there are several other important federal bills impacting national sexual and reproductive rights, including the following:

<sup>16</sup> “SIECUS and Advocates for Youth Oppose the Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA),” SIECUS, November 30th, 2023.

<sup>17</sup> “Despite Updates, SIECUS and Advocates for Youth Remain Opposed to the Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA),” SIECUS, March 14th, 2024

<sup>18</sup> “National Sex Education Standards: Second Edition,” Future of Sex Ed (FOSE) Initiative, 2020

<sup>19</sup> “The Importance of Access to Comprehensive Sex Education,” American Academy of Pediatrics





### Equal Access to Abortion

Coverage in Health Insurance (EACH) Act (HR 561/S 1031) is a federal bill that seeks to eliminate the Hyde Amendment, a harmful rider amendment added yearly on federal appropriations that bans federal funding (including Medicaid) for abortion, with limited exceptions.<sup>20</sup> The bill requires the federal government to offer abortion coverage through federal health insurance programs such as Medicaid and the Indian Health Service and prohibits the government from interfering with private insurance coverage of abortion. The universal right to safe and affordable abortion care is an important part of access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, especially for young people for whom oftentimes the cost is burdensome and prevents them from accessing abortion.<sup>21</sup>



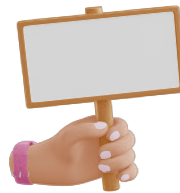
### Women's Health Protection Act

(WHPA), also known as HR 12/S 701, seeks to provide legal protections for abortion for both patients and providers through enshrining the federal right to abortion.<sup>22</sup> This bill is more important now, than ever, in the aftermath of the disastrous Dobbs decision by the Supreme Court. With 215 cosponsors in the House and 49 in the Senate, the bill is only a handful of votes short of passage. There is a clear call to action for the preservation of reproductive rights through the passage of this bill.



### Global Health,

Empowerment, and Rights (HER) Act (HR 556/S 142) would eliminate the "global gag rule", which prohibits the government from funding foreign health care providers that choose to offer abortion care.<sup>23</sup> This prevents sexual and reproductive healthcare agencies across the world who receive aid from the United States from providing necessary abortion care to their population. The passage of this bill is critical to protect the sexual and reproductive rights of young people globally, not just young Americans.



### Rise Up for LGBTQI+ Youth in

School Initiative (H Res 1135/ S Res 628) is a resolution to demand equal educational, civil rights protections, and freedom from erasure for LGBTQI+ young people in K-12 schools.<sup>24</sup> This resolution comes as a response to the past several years of concerted efforts to infringe on the rights of LGBTQIA+ students across the country.

<sup>20</sup> "The Equal Access to Abortion Coverage in Health Insurance (EACH) Act: Groundbreaking Legislation for Abortion Justice," All Above All, 2021.

<sup>21</sup> "New Analysis Sheds Light on the Unique Barriers US Adolescents Face in Obtaining Abortion Care," Guttmacher Institute, April 13, 2024.

<sup>22</sup> "Women's Health Protection Act (WHPA)," Center for Reproductive Rights, June 23, 2023.

<sup>23</sup> "Global HER Act," Population Connection Action Fund.

<sup>24</sup> "Sen. Schatz, Rep. Takano, Rep. Lee Lead GLSEN Rise Up Resolution," GLSEN, March 29, 2023.



Sex education advocates must also continue to advocate for the removal of harmful reproductive health amendments within existing federal legislation such as the Weldon Amendment and Hyde Amendment which restrict abortion access federally and advocate for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex. Through our federal cross-movement work and participation in national coalitions, SIECUS continues to link the fight for sex education with the larger movement for sexual and reproductive health access and freedom.

### ***Title IX Protections and SCOTUS***

One of the bastions of public education is the right for each pupil to receive equal opportunities in education. Of the few federal laws that influence education policy, Title IX is a federal civil rights law in the United States, enacted as part of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX states: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

This law applies to all educational institutions, both public and private, that receive federal funds. Title IX is best known for its impact on gender equality in sports, ensuring equal opportunities and resources for both male and female athletes. However, its scope is broader, addressing all forms of sex-based discrimination in educational settings, including sexual harassment and assault, admissions, financial aid, and employment.



Title IX has been instrumental in promoting gender equity in education, leading to significant increases in female participation in sports and other educational opportunities. Enforcement is overseen by the Office for Civil Rights within the U.S. Department of Education. In April 2024, the Department of Education issued a final ruling that establishes legal protections for LGBTQIA+ students, an incredible achievement at a time when LGBTQIA+ young people are threatened by the possibility of a hostile and discriminatory school environment due to countless legislative attacks.<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, federal district judges have blocked the implementation of this new ruling in several conservative states hostile to LGBTQIA+ young people and at the forefront of numerous legislative attacks on their rights.

The aftermath of the *Dobbs v. Jackson's* decision revealed the unpredictability of the current Supreme Court. As a result, reproductive rights advocates have continuously been on the defense against litigation aimed at stripping these very rights. The Supreme Court has since been the stage for numerous cases attacking abortion such as *Moyle v. United States*, a court case targeting emergency abortion care provided via Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA)<sup>26</sup>, and *Planned Parenthood Southwest Ohio Region et al., v. Ohio Department of Health, et al.*, a case to fight the ban on telehealth abortion in Ohio.<sup>27</sup> Although the Supreme Court is meant to be non-partisan, the illegal selection of conservative judicial appointments by our opposition over the past few years has resulted in the revocation or threat of reduction in American sexual and reproductive rights. Further, the recent decision in the *Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo* case has further strengthened the power of a very hostile Supreme Court and weakened the power of federal agencies which could spell disaster for progressive values and democracy as we know it.<sup>28</sup> Fortunately, the Supreme Court did rule in favor of protecting access to medication abortion through continued use of mifepristone - for the time being.<sup>29</sup> While this right should be indisputable, anti-choice proponents continue to seek legal means of limiting access to critical abortion care at both the state and federal levels.

<sup>25</sup> "Title IX," GLSEN.

<sup>26</sup> "*Idaho and Moyle, et al. v. United States*," American Civil Liberties Union, April 24, 2024.

<sup>27</sup> "*Planned Parenthood Southwest Ohio Region et al., v. Ohio Department of Health, et al.*," American Civil Liberties Union, May 30, 2024

<sup>28</sup> Jessica Waters, "Supreme Court's blow to federal agencies' power will likely weaken abortion rights - 3 issues to watch," Stamford Advocate, July 17, 2024.

<sup>29</sup> "SIECUS Issues Warning About Recent SCOTUS Abortion Ruling," SIECUS, June 14, 2024



## State

This year, 46 states and the District of Columbia held legislative sessions, of which 10 are still active at the time of this publication's release. SIECUS primarily tracks legislative activity across the country that would impact young people's access to sex education and the quality of sex education programming. As such, we are tracking **over 150 sex education bills across 33 states** as of June 31, 2024. This is a 14% increase from the amount of sex education bills we had tracked by the midpoint of last year. While Regressive Minority lawmakers continue to seek ways to dismantle sex education programs, the bills introduced over the past several years remain unpopular. This is because 89% of Americans believe that sex education should be taught in middle schools and 98% of Americans believe it should be taught in high schools.<sup>30</sup> Thus, these lawmakers have returned to attempting to co-opt sex education by forcing their agenda into sex education curriculum. Similar to the abstinence-only movement that arose in the early 80s and was then re-branded as Sexual Risk Avoidance in the late 2010's - this effort is an attempt to capitalize on the popularity and work of advocates to advance sex ed to push a certain morality and ideology in sex education. While the majority of these bills have also failed, **2 regressive sex ed bills have been enacted** in this session so far.



Idaho's House Bill 666 was enacted on March 25, 2024 and prohibits abortion providers from supplying sex education curriculum and instructional material in schools. Idaho currently has one of the most restrictive abortion policies in the country, banning abortion entirely except for saving the life of a pregnant person or when rape or incest has been reported to law enforcement. In 2024, the Supreme Court heard a case brought forth by the state of Idaho in opposition to the federal Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) which requires doctors to provide emergency abortion care to pregnant individuals in life-saving circumstances. The case was recently dismissed; however, these instances clearly showcase the hostile environment for reproductive rights in Idaho.



Tennessee's House Bill 2435 was enacted on April 23, 2024 and now requires schools to show "Meet Baby Olivia", a stigmatizing and scientifically inaccurate fetal ultrasound video developed by a notorious anti-abortion group Live Action, in family life education curriculum.<sup>32</sup> Similar legislation passed in North Dakota last year and this year, at least **11 states introduced "Baby Olivia" legislation** to enact similar requirements in sex education. This will only perpetuate abortion stigma and build a foundation for it within early childhood, ultimately having societal ramifications.

These bills are indicative of the larger effort of the opposition to enact legislation post-Dobbs that addresses the gap in reproductive access and knowledge in states where abortion access is limited or non-existent. These same states also have poor sex education policies and continue to face attacks on inclusive and affirming instruction and classroom environments.

<sup>30</sup> "Survey says (again): People overwhelmingly support sex ed," SIECUS.

<sup>31</sup> "Interactive Map: US Abortion Policies and Access After Roe," Guttmacher Institute.

<sup>32</sup> "SIECUS Condemns Tennessee Lawmakers for Passing 'The Baby Olivia Bill'," SIECUS, April 9, 2024.



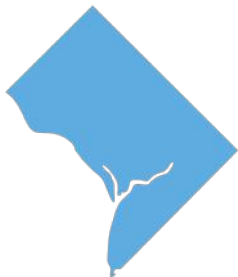
Despite these ongoing regressive efforts, in a turn-around from recent years, **7 progressive sex education bills were also enacted.**



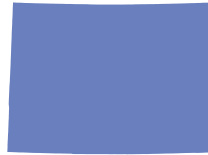
California's Budget Act of 2024, also known as Assembly Bill 107, was signed into law on June 26, 2024 and would allocate about \$600,000 towards their school-based comprehensive sex education program. California is one of the few states to mandate comprehensive sex education in K-12 classrooms across the state.

Additionally, California Assembly Bill 2932 was signed into law on July 15, 2024, and amends the California Healthy Youth Act to ensure comprehensive sexuality education includes instruction on "sextortion" prevention. Sextortion is defined as, "the threat to use sexual or intimate images or videos, however obtained, to compel another person to produce sexual or intimate images or videos, engage in sexual acts, or provide anything of value."

Lastly, California's Assembly Bill 161 was signed into law on July 2, 2024 and ensures that young people being homeschooled in foster care are receiving comprehensive sex education.



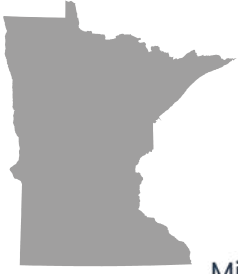
District of Columbia's Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Support Emergency Act, or Bill 875, was signed into law on July 19, 2024 and would provide for the compensation and supervision of at least 50 high school students to work in public schools as sexual health educators.



Colorado's 2024-25 Long Appropriations Bill, also known as House Bill 24-1430, was signed into law on April 29, 2024 and allocates \$1 million dollars toward comprehensive sex education programs. Colorado schools require that IF sex education is being taught in schools then it MUST be comprehensive. Requiring sex education in schools is critical to achieving a future of health and well-being for young people; however, this is not enough. Quality sex education requires classroom space, comprehensive instructional materials and textbooks, teacher training, and more. It is critical that advocates focus on both requiring sex education in schools but also increasing appropriations to be able to implement sex education adequately. In addition to the two sex education funding bills enacted, 6 bills were introduced and would have increased financial support of sex education programming at the state level.







Minnesota's House File 5237 was signed into law on May 20, 2024 and requires the commissioner of education to begin the rulemaking process for adopting state standards for health education. These standards must include standards for required instruction on STIs, mental health, and child sexual abuse prevention, among other subjects. The law also requires the commissioner of education to implement a review of health education standards every 10 years. The passage of this legislation puts Minnesota on a path towards standardizing health education that incorporates sex education.

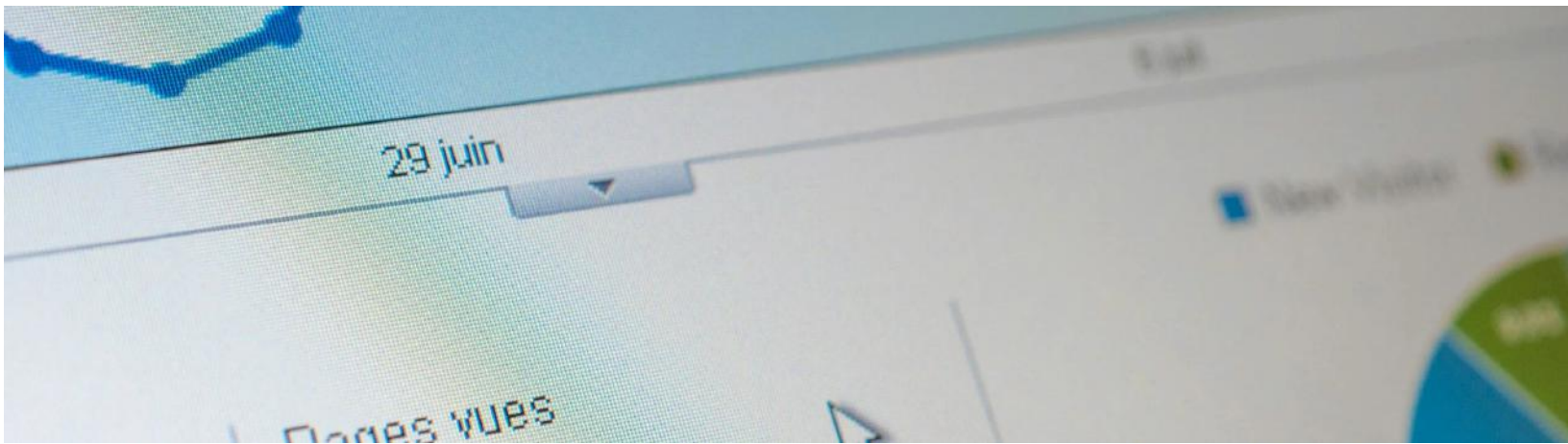


Virginia's House Bill 1221 was signed into law on April 8, 2024 and allows school boards to teach menstrual education in public schools as a family life education. According to the National Sex Education Standards, instruction on puberty and menstruation is a pivotal part of sex education. While this bill is a step in the right direction, it does not require menstrual instruction explicitly, and further advocacy is needed to ensure both the menstrual health and overall reproductive health of young Virginians.





## Data at a Glance



### 2024 Sex Education Bill Stats



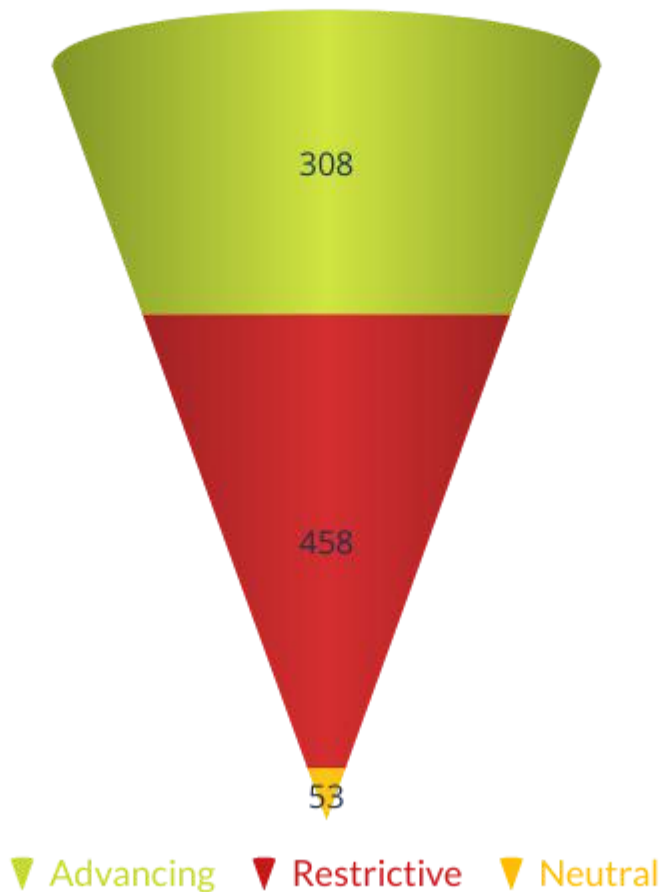
■ Introduced ■ Passed one Chamber ■ Dead/Failed ■ Enacted

Beyond sex education, SIECUS tracks legislation that has the potential to impact young people both in and out of the classroom, including in the healthcare system. In fact, **regressive bills outnumbered positive or progressive legislation by almost 40%.**



# Advancing vs Restrictive

Legislation in 2024



Interestingly, this is an **8.2% decrease in regressive legislation** compared to the amount of regressive bills tracked at the midpoint of 2023. Further, at the midpoint of 2023 our opposition had a 13% success rate in passing regressive legislation; however, this year SIECUS has observed a drop in the opposition's **success rate down to 9.6%**. This is definitely substantiated by the fact that advocates nationwide saw the adjournment of many state legislative sessions without any significant advancement of anti-LGBTQIA+, anti-abortion, and anti-sex education bills.

Of the 816 bills SIECUS has tracked across various issue areas impacting young people, as of the beginning of July 2024, 67 have been enacted. The following section will discuss in detail the patterns and trends in state legislation monitored and analyzed by SIECUS at the midpoint of the year along with notable enacted legislation.



## State Snapshot: Florida



To understand Florida’s hostile and confusing school environments, it is essential to recall two pieces of legislation passed during the 2022 and 2023 legislative sessions HB 1529 and HB 1069. In 2022, Florida passed HB 1529 – commonly referred to as the “Don’t Say Gay” bill that prohibited instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity in schools. Then in 2023, HB 1069 furthered government control over what is taught in sex education and expanded book banning. Advocates in the state dubbed HB 1069 either the “Don’t Say They” or “Don’t Say Period” bill for its goal of defining ‘sex’ as binary and unchangeable, prohibiting classroom instruction on reproductive health, gender identity, and pronouns, requiring that all instruction regarding human sexuality be approved by the Florida Department of Education, and mandating that school districts develop an “objection” process for parents and residents to challenge classroom or library materials. HB 1069 was passed and enacted into law on July 1, 2023 despite ambiguous language that left school districts unsure if their instructional materials were acceptable and in a scramble to submit lesson plans to the Department of Education prior to the 2024 school year with a deadline of submitting by September 30, 2023.

Community groups\* on the ground in Florida raised concerns that HB 1069’s new requirements were going to result in school districts totally opting out of providing health and sexuality education for the 2024 school year due to a lack of guidance from the Department of Education and new reporting requirements. Weeks after the September 30, 2023 deadline to submit instructional materials, Chancellor of Public Schools, Dr. Paul Burns, released a memorandum outlining school districts responsibilities on October 13, 2023 followed by the Department of Education calling for “State Expert Reviewers for 2023-2024 Health Education Materials per House Bill 1069” in December of 2023 – halfway through the school year. This makes it abundantly obvious that the Florida legislature has once again passed legislation that leaves the Department of Education overwhelmed and ill prepared to lead school districts and the confusion trickles down to teachers. Meanwhile the Florida Department of Education claims that “transparency in instruction” is the goal of HB 1069 and Governor Ron DeSantis touts that these policies allow students “to focus on core academic subjects and reject indoctrination in the classroom”. Ultimately, the legislative actions in Florida have created a chaotic educational environment, leaving educators and students struggling with uncertainty and a lack of clear direction – and not receiving quality sexual health education.



A man with dark hair tied back, wearing large orange headphones and black-rimmed glasses, is seated at a desk. He is wearing a black hoodie with three white stripes on the sleeve and blue jeans. He has his right hand resting on his chin, looking down at a laptop screen with a thoughtful expression. A pen is in his left hand, which is resting on a stack of papers. The background features a wooden wall with horizontal slats. The overall lighting is warm and focused on the man.

# Diving Deeper Into State Legislative Trends 2024



# Diving Deeper Into State Legislative Trends in 2024

SIECUS has tracked over **800 state bills** by the midpoint of the year, including sex education bills. In addition to analyzing trends in sex education policy, SIECUS also monitored state legislation that would impact the sexual and reproductive rights of young people in schools, in extracurricular activities, and in the healthcare system. Several key positive and negative trends emerged in this year's state legislation; some recurring themes and others completely new. For a complete list of bills tracked by SIECUS, please refer to [Addendum Table A](#).

## Progressive Legislative Trends

SIECUS tracked **309 progressive bills** by the midpoint of 2024. Some key trends that emerged were in menstrual equity, LGBTQIA+ rights, and improving the quality of sex education.

### ***Abuse and Assault Prevention Education***

Instruction on child sexual abuse and assault prevention is an important part of early childhood sex education. Learning about topics such as consent, communication strategies, signs of healthy versus toxic relationships, and how to identify trusted adults are among the many concepts taught as a part of this instruction. At the midpoint of the year, **44 child sexual abuse and assault prevention bills have been introduced and 2 have been enacted.**



Connecticut's [House Bill 5262](#) was signed into law on June 5, 2024 and requires the Department of Public Health, Department of Education, and Department of Children and Families to work in conjunction with CDC's DASH agency to administer the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and include a sexual abuse and assault awareness prevention survey which was developed by the aforementioned departments with input from stakeholders. The [Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) is a key form of data collection that forms many evidence-based, adolescent sexual health programs including sex education in a way that is tailored to the demographics of each community served.<sup>33</sup>



Virginia's [House Bill 215](#) was enacted into law on April 17, 2024 and requires the Department of Education to develop culturally appropriate, age-appropriate, and trauma-informed Title IX and sexual harassment prevention training modules concerning Title IX rights and protections, consent, and sexual harassment prevention and reporting for grades 9 and 10 and to make such training modules available to each school board. While a step in the right direction, it is critical that this instruction be required before and beyond grades 9 and 10 as according to the 2019 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 16.8% of high school girls reported already having experienced sexual violence.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, young Virginians must learn about sexual violence prevention within the context of sex education in order to impact behavior over the long term.

<sup>33</sup> "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)," CDC, June 14, 2024.

<sup>34</sup> "If/Then Series: Sexual Assault Prevention," SIECUS, 2023.



Interestingly, some states that have struggled to advance their sex education due to conservative backlash have managed to advance legislation that requires instruction on assault and abuse prevention strategies, even though both of these go hand-in-hand. This presents yet another avenue through which sex education can be promoted as a solution, especially as over 30 years of research shows that this instruction can lower the incidence of intimate partner violence and improve relationships.<sup>35</sup>

## ***Improving Sex Education Curriculum***

SIECUS supports the implementation of sex education that aligns with the National Sex Education Standards, the baseline framework developed by experts from which to build comprehensive curricula. Further, this instruction **MUST** be comprehensive, evidence-based, medically-accurate, developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and LGBTQIA+ inclusive. **23 states and DC introduced legislation this year to improve sex education.** This is **5 more states** than last year!

Some of these bills, such as Alaska Senate Bill 43, would require sex education to be taught in grades K-12. Another avenue for improving sex education is through bills like Georgia House Bill 822 which would make sex education age appropriate and medically accurate. Similarly, this bill and others also sought to improve sex education curriculum by adding content areas like consent. While these bills ultimately did not pass, the increase in introduced sex education legislation reflects that progressive lawmakers, parents, and students want better sex education and are hard at work trying to advance it.

## ***Mental Health Education***

Sex education and mental health are intertwined. Quality sex education dispels harmful stereotypes, teaches appreciation for inclusion and diversity, and promotes a generation built on compassion and empathy. Further, teaching on the importance of engaging in healthy behaviors and decision-making that will positively impact students' mental and overall wellbeing is both a part of sex ed and mental health education. This year, there were **46 bills in 20 states that would require mental health education in schools** and that would increase accessibility to mental health services for young people. Of these, **3 were enacted.**



<sup>35</sup> "Key Findings from 'Comprehensive Sexuality Education as a Primary Prevention Strategy for Sexual Violence Perpetration,'" National Sexual Violence Resource Center, February 15, 2021.





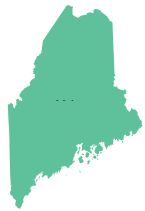
Louisiana’s [Senate Bill 310](#) was signed into law on May 28, 2024 and requires schools to put the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline hotline number and a local suicide prevention hotline number on the back of all student identification cards and on websites. Providing resources for suicide prevention for young people is incredibly important in addressing the ongoing youth mental health crisis but instruction is still needed to supplement this effort.

## ***Period Poverty in Schools***

Similar to past years, menstrual equity legislation was a major trend in this year’s session. In fact, **the number of menstrual equity bills increased by 84.6 %, with over 48 bills introduced.** These bills typically require public schools to provide menstrual products like pads and tampons at no cost and/or require instruction on menstruation. In addition to Virginia HB 1221, **2 menstrual equity bills were introduced.**



Colorado’s [House Bill 1164](#) was signed into law on June 5, 2024 and would require public school agencies to provide menstrual products at no cost in at least 25% of school bathrooms and increase the percentage of coverage over the course of the next several years. This ensures that the inability to access affordable menstrual products will not be a hindrance to a child’s education.



Maine’s [Legislative Document 1263](#) was passed into law on March 21, 2024 and requires secondary schools to put a suicide prevention hotline number on student identification cards.



New York’s [Assembly Resolution 2245](#) was approved on May 22, 2024 and would proclaim Period Poverty Awareness Week from May 20–May 28 to emphasize how the lack of access to menstrual products for girls can impact their educational attainment.



Virginia’s [House Bill 603](#) was passed into law on April 17, 2024 and requires mental health education to be incorporated in physical and health education courses. This instruction must include instruction on coping with feelings, seeking support from trusted adults, and focusing on the importance of mental well being.

Research has shown that [sex education improves mental health outcomes especially for the most vulnerable segments of young people such as LGBTQIA+ youth.](#)<sup>36</sup> Thus, advocates for instruction on mental health should also advocate for the advancement of comprehensive sex education curricula that encompass instruction on mental health related topics.

Menstrual equity is key to a young person’s reproductive, mental, and overall well-being. Additionally, learning about menstruation is an integral part of sex education and aligns with the National Sex Education Standards. Legislation requiring instruction on menstruation is an opportunity for sex education advocates to advance sexual health education in states as these bills enjoy widespread approval across the aisle and greater success in becoming law. For more information on menstrual equity legislation across the country, visit Alliance for Period Supplies and PERIOD’s [Legislation Tracker.](#)<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Goldfarb (n 15).

<sup>37</sup> [“Menstrual Equity Legislation,”](#) Alliance for Period Supplies.



## Protections for LGBTQIA+ Youth

The past few years have largely been marred by countless attacks on the rights of LGBTQIA+ young people, especially trans and nonbinary young people. This year, the tide finally changed as at least **50 pro-LGBTQIA youth bills were introduced**. These protective bills include efforts to ban conversion therapy, require the usage of correct pronouns and preferred names, and require LGBTQIA+ inclusive curricula. **4 of these bills were signed into law** and will increase protections for LGBTQIA+ young people.



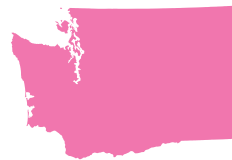
California's Assembly Bill 1955 was signed into law July 15, 2024 and requires the State Department of Education to develop resources for the support of parents, guardians, and families of LGBTQ students. It also prohibits school districts from enforcing or enacting any policy that requires an employee to forcibly out an LGBTQ student without their consent. After so many pieces of legislation across the country requiring school staff to forcibly out LGBTQIA+ students, this law is another win for LGBTQIA rights activists.



Colorado's House Bill 1039 was signed into law on April 29, 2024 and requires public school employees to use student's chosen names and pronouns. Refusal to do so will result in the student being able to file for discrimination. Additionally, schools shall implement a written policy for students wishing to change their name or pronouns within school records. This is a celebratory win for LGBTQIA+ students and their families who have faced numerous hostile legislation in other states trying to forcibly "out" them or allow for school employees to refuse to use their chosen pronouns and names.



Maine's Legislative Document 227 was signed into law on April 22, 2024 and is a shield law, protecting parents of minor's accessing gender affirming care and medical professionals providing reproductive and gender affirming care.<sup>38</sup> Shield laws have become increasingly critical in the past few years after both the overturning of Roe v Wade and the rise in anti-transgender state legislation. SIECUS believes all young people should have access to the life-saving and affirming care they need and deserve both in and outside the school system so they can lead healthier and more fulfilling lives.



Washington's House Bill 2331 was signed into law on March 28, 2024 and prohibits school districts from refusing to approve or prohibiting instructional material on the basis that it relates to the contributions of individuals/groups from a protected class including the LGBTQIA+ community. Additionally, instructional review committees must develop programs to recruit diverse parents to participate in the review process. Inclusion within school curricula especially across subject areas allows for LGBTQIA+ students to feel seen and represented alongside other students and is necessary.

These bills are incredibly important especially in the face of attacks on inclusive and safe school environments for LGBTQIA+ students, especially when laws like "Don't Say Gay" are passed despite being unpopular with the majority of Americans.<sup>39</sup> Further, SIECUS supports LGBTQIA+ inclusion within both sex education and general school curricula that reflects the needs of all students. For more information on pro-LGBTQIA+ legislation impacting schools, visit our partner GLSEN's State Legislative Tracker.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> "TRANSGENDER HEALTHCARE "SHIELD" LAWS," Movement Advancement Project.

<sup>39</sup> Meredith Deliso, "6 in 10 Americans oppose laws prohibiting LGBTQ lessons in elementary school: POLL," March 13, 2022.

<sup>40</sup> "State Legislative Tracker 2024: Pro-LGBTQIA+ Legislation Affecting Schools," GLSEN, 2024.



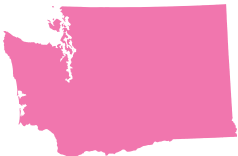
## ***Racially Inclusive School Curriculum***

Historically, sex education has been disproportionately targeted at communities of color in a manner that has reinforced negative and harmful sexual stereotypes of racialized people while ignoring the sexual and reproductive harm experienced by racialized people due to systemic racism in the United States.<sup>41</sup> Further, it is important that when instructing on sex education that the curriculum is based on a reproductive justice framework. For this reason, SIECUS is committed to advancing racial equity and tracks legislation that promotes racial justice principles not only within not sex education but in all classroom instruction. As of July 2024, SIECUS has tracked **62 bills that seek to make classroom instruction more racially and culturally inclusive** and a more honest portrayal of our country's history and the contributions of people of color. **2 of these bills have been enacted thus far.**



### Maryland's House Bill 1386

was signed into law on April 25, 2024 and requires each county board of education and certain nonpublic schools to provide each employee with antisemitism and Islamophobia prevention training, annually. Additionally, it requires the Maryland Department of Education to develop an anti-bias training program for school employees.



### Washington's Senate Bill

5462 was signed into law on March 18, 2024 and expands school curricula to include the histories and contributions of historically marginalized and underrepresented groups.

Instruction in which all students seem themselves represented and their communities recognized and uplifted is key to the mental well-being of young people. This is important in both sex education and standard school curriculum.



<sup>41</sup> "Centering Racial Justice in Sex Ed," Sex Education Collaborative.



## State Snapshot: Minnesota



Minnesota? More like **WIN**-nesota! The passage of their educational omnibus bills – [HF 5237](#) and [SF 3567](#) – are a monumental victory for public education. They increase funding for public schools, ensuring more resources for classrooms, teachers, and student support services as well as expanding access to early childhood education programs. We are most excited for provisions in HF5237 for updating health and wellness standards in K-12 schools!

Prior to the 2024 legislative session, our partners in Minnesota identified that updating health standards, specifically those covering sexual health and wellness, would significantly improve student well-being and academic performance. Partners initially filed legislation ([SF 3746](#) and companion [HF 3682](#)) that would have required the Minnesota Commissioner of Education to create health standards – this strategy is often referred to as legislative rulemaking. Partners met resistance with pitching legislative rulemaking as a stand-alone bill and feared that it would not move – but by including updating health and wellness standards into a general education omnibus bill, they were able to secure its passage.

By incorporating modern nutrition guidelines, physical activity requirements, and mental health education, schools can create healthier environments that foster better learning outcomes. Enhanced health standards also ensure that students receive up-to-date information about personal health and wellness, equipping them with the knowledge and habits needed for lifelong well-being. While we cheer alongside our partners and all public education advocates in Minnesota, there is still much work to be done – partners and stakeholders will work alongside Minnesota’s Departments of Education and Health to develop updated guidelines, ensure funds are properly allocated for training educators and school staff, and establish mechanisms to monitor implementation, as well as provide ongoing support to ensure compliance and effectiveness. SIECUS looks forward to supporting partners in Minnesota through this process to ensure that the sexual health and wellbeing curriculum is inclusive, relevant, and medically accurate.



## Regressive Legislative Trends

SIECUS tracked **462 regressive bills by the midpoint of 2024**. Some key trends that emerged were in social media content bans and online censorship efforts, attacks on transgender youth within interscholastic sports and the healthcare system, and attempts to regress sex education at the intersection of abortion access.



### *"Baby Olivia" and Other Attacks on Sex Ed*

Sex education is widely supported by the American public. The past years of countless attacks on sex education have yielded few wins for our opposition as a result. After the *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision, trigger bans in many states went into effect and legislative attacks on abortion exponentially increased. According to Guttmacher data<sup>42</sup>, at least 18 bills were introduced to specifically restrict minor's access to abortion care through parental involvement clauses, with one being enacted into law. As a result, many states have a gap now in both access to reproductive health care services AND access to instruction. Opposition lawmakers recognize this and also understand that the majority of Americans on both sides of the aisle are in support of sex education. For this reason, they have instead begun to introduce legislation that would shift sex education curricula to align with their own agendas.

"Meet Baby Olivia" is an example of one of these types of regressive legislation. It requires the viewing of a stigmatizing, scientifically inaccurate "fetal ultrasound" video that has been developed by a notorious anti-abortion group. Last year, one of these bills passed in North Dakota and has confused and frustrated educators on the ground working to teach quality and medically-accurate sex education. These bills only seek to perpetuate abortion-related stigma and cultivate a society where today's young people grow up to disregard and disrespect people's reproductive autonomy and decision-making. Many iterations of this bill were introduced in states across the country. In fact, **15 "Meet Baby Olivia" bills were introduced** in Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. As mentioned earlier, the Tennessee bill has been signed into law and will now impact young Tennesseans in family life education.

<sup>42</sup> "State Legislation Tracker," Guttmacher Institute.

## Maternal Mortality. Birth Justice and Sex Education

Attacks on reproductive health care, including access to abortion and barriers to contraceptive access, continue to plague Americans. There are many ramifications to this lack of access including forcibly having to carry pregnancies to term, even when it is medically or physically inadvisable. According to the Turnaway Study, a 10 year study on the impact of denying individuals an abortion conducted by ANSIRH, the effects of not receiving an abortion include increased likelihood for serious medical complications at the end of pregnancy for the pregnant person, including eclampsia and death, and an increased likelihood of pregnant people experiencing poor physical health for years after the pregnancy.<sup>43</sup>

Furthermore, maternal mortality has been steadily on the rise<sup>44</sup> in the United States for several years and is especially concerning in states that ban or restrict access to abortion care<sup>45</sup> and other full reproductive health care services. Pregnant people in these states often also lack comprehensive sexual health education programming, putting them at a disadvantage of understanding pregnancy prevention, the health risks of becoming pregnant, and best practices for ensuring a healthy pregnancy. As a result, they may be more likely to have unplanned pregnancies, more at risk of a high risk pregnancy, and may be more vulnerable to adverse pregnancy outcomes.

Currently, the United States ranks far below similar high-income nations on maternal mortality measures. Specifically, Black women in the United States face the highest risk of maternal mortality compared to their White counterparts and other racial groups. The result of this significant health inequity has led to the founding of the birth justice movement which aims to reduce maternal complications and death for Black mothers and other mothers of color.<sup>46</sup>

Maternal mortality and birth justice are immensely important to understanding sexual and reproductive health. Further, when utilizing a reproductive justice approach it is recognized that all individuals deserve the opportunity to live fulfilling lives where they can experience wellness, pleasure, and have the choice to not reproduce or reproduce in a healthy manner and raise that child safely. Quality sex education, according to the NSES, involves comprehensive instruction on reproductive anatomy and physiology which builds a foundation for understanding contraception, pregnancy, and childbirth. Additionally, it provides students with the full spectrum of available sexual and reproductive health services.

For this reason, sex education is a critical tool for addressing the issue of maternal mortality especially in a time when pregnant individuals are experiencing so many increasing barriers to a healthy outcome. It is important for sex educators to pay attention to disparate impacts of reproductive health restrictions on maternal health outcomes to better understand the intersection and shared goals between the birth justice and sex education movements.

<sup>43</sup> "The Turnaway Study," ANSIRH.

<sup>44</sup> Kathy Katella, "Maternal Mortality Is on the Rise: 8 Things To Know," Yale Medicine, May 22, 2023.

<sup>45</sup> "STATE ABORTION BANS THREATEN NEARLY 7 MILLION BLACK WOMEN, EXACERBATE THE EXISTING BLACK MATERNAL MORTALITY CRISIS," National Partnership for Women and Families, May 2024.

<sup>46</sup> "Birth Justice," ANSIRH.

<sup>47</sup> Eesha Pendharkar, "Which States Are Considering 'Don't Say Gay' Bills and Where They Stand," Education Week, February 28, 2023.



Similar to past year's, the opposition continues to push "Don't Say Gay" -esque bills that would limit or prohibit discussion on sexual orientation and gender identity in both sex education and other school curriculum.<sup>47</sup> At the midpoint of the year, there were 26 "Don't Say Gay" bills introduced. Thankfully, due to rising notoriety, these bills have largely been defeated with only 2 bills passing in Louisiana and New Hampshire.



Louisiana's [House Bill 122](#) was signed into law on June 19, 2024 and prohibits instruction and discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity between teachers and students. Additionally, teachers cannot disclose their own sexual orientation or gender identity to students.



New Hampshire's [House Bill 1312](#) was signed into law on July 26, 2024 and requires school districts to adopt a policy of notifying parents before any material is taught on sexual orientation and gender identity. The law does give an exception for student-initiated queries.

This trend of restricting the mention and instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity underscores the continued need for cross-movement coalitions between sex education and LGBTQIA+ rights activists to defend against a common opposition.

Finally, the "Parental Rights" movement organized by the [Regressive Minority](#), whose aim is to see the destabilization of the public education system, continues to wither away due to its unpopularity.<sup>48</sup> Yet, at least 35 "Parental Rights" bills were introduced this session, seeking to increase parental oversight when it comes to enrollment in sex education and reviewing sex education curriculum. Although, none have passed thus far, SIECUS continues to monitor these fear mongering attempts by our opposition to confuse and mislead parents against evidence-based and age-appropriate instruction in sexual and reproductive health.

## Anti-Transgender Youth Health Care and Sports Bans

2023 was a record-breaking year for anti-transgender legislation in the United States with over three times the bills being introduced compared to 2022.<sup>49</sup> 2024 has been no different and is on track to be the worst year for legislative attacks on transgender young people. According to Trans Legislation Tracker, over 620 anti-trans bills were introduced by the midpoint of 2024.<sup>50</sup> These bills include legislation that would restrict critical access to gender affirming care for minors, prohibiting transgender girls from participating in interscholastic sports teams aligned with gender identity, and bills disregarding the importance of using correct pronouns and chosen names for transgender students. SIECUS tracked at least 43 bills that would constitute medical care bans and restrict young people's access to gender affirming care such as puberty blockers. This number does not encompass general bans impacting both adult and minor populations. In somewhat good news, there has been an over 58% decrease in medical care bans tracked by SIECUS between 2023 and 2024. This, however, could be due to the fact that 25 states already ban best practice gender affirming care for minors through legislation passed in recent years and existing outdated laws.<sup>51</sup> This year, 5 of these bills have passed thus far impacting transgender youth in New Hampshire, Ohio, South Carolina, and Wyoming.

<sup>48</sup> "Exposing Hate: The Truth About Attacks on Our Kids, Schools, and Diversity," SIECUS.

<sup>49</sup> "Tracking the rise of anti-trans bills in the U.S.," Trans Legislation Tracker.

<sup>50</sup> "2024 anti-trans bills tracker," Trans Legislation Tracker.

<sup>51</sup> "BANS ON BEST PRACTICE MEDICAL CARE FOR TRANSGENDER YOUTH," Movement Advancement Project.

<sup>52</sup> Aryn Fields, "ICYMI: AP Debunks Extremist Claims About Gender Affirming Care," April 25, 2023.





New Hampshire's Senate Bill 573 was signed into law on June 14, 2024 and requires any individual or entity to obtain parental consent prior to performing medical care interventions on a child. While intentionally vague, this bill will likely restrict minors access to gender affirming care as well. Additionally, House Bill 619 was signed into law on July 26 and prohibits physicians from performing genital gender reassignment surgery on minors. As a note, gender affirming surgeries are rarely performed on transgender minors unless they meet specific criteria and generally occur after they reach legal adulthood.<sup>52</sup>



Wyoming's Senate File 99 was signed into law on March 22, 2024 and prohibits physicians from providing gender affirming care to minors.

Another potential reason for the decrease in legislation could be a shift from legislation attacking transgender and gender nonconforming youth in the medical system but instead attacking young transgender students in the school system via interscholastic sports bans and correct pronoun usage. At the midpoint of this year, SIECUS has tracked 38 transgender youth sports bans. Most of these bills specifically target transgender girls from being able to participate in interscholastic girls teams, under the guise of "gender equity". 2 of these bills have been enacted thus far, in addition to Ohio's House Bill 68.



Ohio's House Bill 68 was passed into law on January 24, 2024 and prohibits a medical professional from providing gender affirming care or surgery. It also prohibits mental health professionals from diagnosing or treating a minor with a gender-related condition, resulting in licensing punishments. Lastly, it prohibits Medicaid funds from being used for gender transition services for minors. It also requires schools to separate sports teams by biological sex, constituting a transgender sports ban.



New Hampshire's House Bill 1205 was signed into law on July 26, 2024 and requires schools to designate athletic teams by sex and prohibits transgender girls from participating in female athletic teams.



South Carolina's House Bill 4624 was signed into law on May 21, 2024 and bans gender affirming care for minors. It also prohibits the use of Medicaid to fund gender affirming procedures.



Utah's House Bill 257 was signed into law on January 30, 2024 and prohibits government entities from making sex-based distinctions from public funded programs and facilities, which includes schools, unless that program is designated for females assigned at birth. This would inevitably impact interscholastic sports teams as well as bathroom access for transgender students.



Affirming school environments are critical for the development and mental well-being of transgender and non-binary youth. Legislation that deliberately attempts to insult and disregard their identity by prohibiting correct pronoun usage, protecting school employees refusing to respect pronouns and chosen names, and requiring parental consent for changes on school records is immensely harmful to their health. As of July 2024, **over 33 bills in 21 states** have been introduced that would seek to create hostile classroom environments for transgender students through the aforementioned clauses. Of these, **4 have been enacted.**



Idaho's House Bill 538 was signed into law on April 8, 2024 and states that school employees' employment shall not be adversely affected if they refuse to use a person's preferred name or pronouns that do not align with their legal documents. Further, it states that students may not be disciplined for refusing to use a person's preferred name or pronouns that do not align with their legal documents. This bill adds onto several existing Idaho laws that restrict the rights of transgender people including a school sports ban and medical care ban.<sup>53</sup>



Louisiana's House Bill 121 was signed into law on June 19, 2024 and requires that teachers use the name listed on a student's birth certificate unless the parent requests otherwise. If the teacher objects to using the student's chosen name, a student can be moved to a new classroom. Further, teachers are not required to use pronouns if it objects with their religious views.



Tennessee's Senate Bill 1810 was signed into law on May 1, 2024 and prohibits a school employee from providing false or misleading information to a student's parents regarding the student's gender identity. This law also allows parents to file civil actions against the school. This type of legislation leaves affirming schools and teachers vulnerable to litigation that they do not have the time and resources to fight.



Wyoming's Senate File 9 was signed into law on March 5, 2024 and it would prohibit school districts from developing any policies to limit the parental right to making education decisions for their children or limit parental notification of changes in a child's educational, physical, mental or emotional health or well-being. While not explicitly stated, this purposefully vague language regarding mental and emotional changes is regarded by LGBTQIA+ advocates to include experiences of gender dysphoria or "coming out" regarding sexual orientation. These types of bills constitute "forced outing" clauses which means that school staff can forcibly reveal a student's sexual orientation or gender identity before they are ready to tell their parents. This can put LGBTQIA+ students' physical and mental well-being in jeopardy and has the potential to influence hostile home environments for them.

It is of the greatest importance for sex education advocates to defend against such attacks as sex education should be LGBTQIA+ inclusive and should support the next generation of young people who will recognize and affirm all people in their identities. For detailed tracking of all LGBTQIA+ state legislation, please visit our partners at Equality Federation.<sup>54</sup> For more closer tracking on anti-transgender legislation specifically, visit Trans Legislation Tracker.

<sup>53</sup> Brooke Migdon, "Idaho governor signs bill barring required use of transgender students' pronouns," The Hill, April 10, 2024"

<sup>54</sup> "State Legislation Tracker," Equality Federation.

## New Trend Alert!

# Restrictions on Social Media: Progressive or Regressive?



Social media safety has been a concern for Americans over the past several years, in part due to its contribution to the youth mental health crisis. Yet, a solution to the problem is far from simple. On the one hand, social media overuse has been linked to negative mental health outcomes in young people including heightened depression, anxiety, and lower self-esteem. Conversely, social media can also offer positive benefits to mental health as well, such as increasing feelings of connectedness and allowing youth to find community. This can be especially true for vulnerable youth, such as LGBTQIA+ and racialized youth.<sup>56</sup>

Additionally, social media platforms can be an avenue for young people trying to gain sexual health knowledge, especially when there is a lack of state sex ed policies and lack of sex education in schools. According to a 2023 survey, almost half of teens say they have learned more sex education from TikTok than in the classroom.<sup>57</sup> As a result, state lawmakers across the nation are trying a variety of solutions to the issue of social media and youth mental health. Unfortunately, many of these efforts have been co-opted by our opposition in a manner that would instead breed online censorship and restrictions on valuable sexual health information and affirming resources for young people rather than simply promoting positive mental health outcomes.<sup>58</sup>

In 2024, there were 103 bills introduced that attempted to address the impact social media can have on young people's mental health. Of these 103 bills, 7 were considered to be progressive, because they focus on addressing the potential harmful impacts of social media at the root cause, by focusing on teaching young people media literacy skills in schools. Conversely, regressive bills solely rely on online censorship strategies to attempt to prohibit young people from accessing content online, whether truly harmful or not.

<sup>55</sup> "Teen Social Media Addiction and Mental Health," Newport Academy, October 23, 2024.

<sup>56</sup> "Social Media and Youth Mental Health: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory," Department of Health and Human Services, 2023.

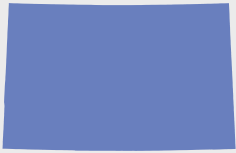
<sup>57</sup> Lois Shearing, "Is it any surprise young people are turning to TikTok to learn about sex?," March 1, 2023.

<sup>58</sup> "If/Then: Online Censorship & Sex Education," SIECUS, 2024



## **The Good**

*One of these progressive social media bills passed in Colorado.*



Colorado's House Bill 1136 was signed into law on June 6, 2024 and would require the State Department of Education to create and maintain a resource bank of evidence-based, research-based program materials and curricula pertaining to the mental health impacts of social media use by children and teens. The bill would also require a social media platform to display a pop-up warning to a user who is under the age of 18 when the user: (1) Has spent one hour on social media platforms in a 24-hour period; and (2) Is on a social media platform between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. The requirement of instruction on social media and its impact on mental health is a great alternative to content bans and restrictions on social media that have the chance of censoring valuable resources.

HB 1136 is an example of a bill that is progressive as it turns the issue of social media use into an educational opportunity and requires evidence-based and quality instruction on online media safety. Rather than punishing or prohibiting students, this instruction will build a foundation in young people that encourages critical thinking skills when utilizing social media and consuming various forms of media, and ultimately keep them safer and healthier online.

## **The Okay?**

The remaining bills are either restrictive (77) or would have a neutral impact (22). Two of the bills deemed to have a neutral impact by SIECUS have passed.



Georgia's Senate Bill 351 was signed into law on April 23, 2024 and will allow schools to develop and implement social media safety education that may include the effects of social media usage, maintaining personal safety/privacy online, and reporting suspicious behavior. The (state/federal) Department of Education is required to create a curriculum. Lastly, local governing bodies must create a policy that prohibits social media use during/at school and a disciplinary policy for students who do not abide. The impact of this legislation is somewhat unclear; while the introduction of instruction on social media safety is important, the use of disciplinary measures against students accessing social media could be misused to target specific vulnerable students. Additionally, according to research, disciplinary measures are generally not effective at curbing usage of social media or any unwanted health behavior.



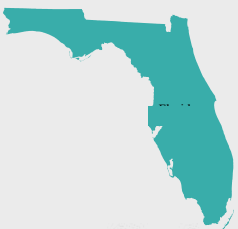
Utah's House Bill 464 was signed into law on March 13, 2024 and allows a minor or parent to bring a cause of action against a social media company in court for an adverse mental health outcome arising from the minor's excessive use of the social media. This bill was deemed to be neutral. While young people are facing a mental health crisis that has scientifically been linked to social media, it is most likely that young people will be best equipped when they are provided with education and mental health supports will be more effective long-term over punitive measures and opening up litigation against social media platforms that would present a long, uphill battle.

## The Ugly

Finally, **12 restrictive bills were enacted** that would impact minors' access to social media in 10 states.



Alabama's House Bill 164 was signed into law on April 18, 2024 and requires age verification for online platforms that have materials that are deemed "harmful to minors". Additionally, it assesses a tax on the gross proceeds of revenue generated from the sale, distribution, and memberships of material deemed "harmful to minors" within the state. The use of a vaguely-defined, blanket phrase such as "harmful to minors" with no exceptions allows for the potential censorship of age-appropriate and necessary sexual health information and LGBTQIA+ resources, presenting yet another obstruction for young people trying to seek knowledge to improve their health and well-being.



Florida's House Bill 3 was signed into law on March 25, 2024 and requires age verification on social media platforms and creates private right of action as well as attorney general enforcement and requires sites to have a report feature for unlawful access and the ability to block access to websites and pages deemed harmful to minors. Age verification methods are another means of censoring free speech and access to information for young people<sup>59</sup> as opposed to focusing on truly preventative methods such as instruction on social media safety.

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<sup>58</sup> "ACLU OF FLORIDA STATEMENT ON GOV. DESANTIS SIGNING SOCIAL MEDIA CENSORSHIP BILL INTO LAW," American Civil Liberties Union, March 26, 2024.





Idaho's [House Bill 498](#) was signed into law on March 21, 2024 and states that any website that publishes material "harmful to minors" shall be liable for civil action suits if they fail to provide a reasonable age verification method.



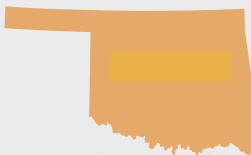
Indiana's [Senate Bill 17](#) was signed into law on March 13, 2024 and requires websites that display materials "harmful to minors" to use a reasonable age verification method to prevent a minor from accessing said website.



Kansas's [Senate Bill 394](#) was passed into law on April 25, 2024 and requires the use of age-verification technology to prohibit access to websites that contains material that are deemed "harmful to minors" which includes acts of "homosexuality" in the definition, thus impacting websites containing LGBTQIA resources.



Nebraska's Online Age Verification Liability Act ([LB 1092](#)) was signed into law on April 18, 2024 and requires mandated age verification mechanisms for website and media applications to prevent minor use.



Oklahoma's [Senate Bill 1959](#) was signed into law on April 26, 2024 and requires enforcement of age verification on platforms via private lawsuits and state attorney general action. It also requires commercial entities to provide subscribers the opportunity to deny any material deemed "harmful to minors".



South Carolina's Child Online Safety Act ([HB 3424](#)) was signed into law on May 21, 2024 and creates a private right of action against websites that do not prevent minors from accessing "pornographic" material via age verification method.



Tennessee's House Bill 1891 was signed into law on May 2, 2024 and requires social media companies to verify the age of an account holder. It further requires parental consent if a minor is trying to become an account holder. Senate Bill 1792 was also signed into law on May 28th and requires an individual or commercial entity that publishes or distributes a website that contains a substantial portion of material "harmful to minors" must perform age-verification methods to verify the age of individuals attempting to access the material. It further specifies that a violation of age verification requirements is a Class C felony.



Utah's Senate Bill 89 was signed into law on January 19, 2024 and requires minors to receive parental approval before becoming the holders of social media accounts. Additionally, it requires social media companies to shut off access for minor's accounts between 10:30 pm - 6:30 am. Senate Bill 194 was also signed into law on March 13, 2024 and requires social media companies to implement an age verification system to determine if the account holder is a minor and set to default privacy settings to the maximum amount for minors, in addition to having a set timer on daily usage.

Social media and online safety are concepts that fall under the umbrella of media literacy that should be taught in sex education that aligns with the NSES. For this reason, sex education could be a vehicle in changing the impact social media and the Internet has on youth mental health in a way that only better their overall well-being.





A sunset scene with a bright sun low on the horizon, casting a golden glow over a body of water. In the foreground, the dark silhouette of a hill is visible, with a few small figures of people standing on its crest. The sky is filled with soft, golden clouds.

# Implications for the Future of Sex Ed

## Implications for the Future of Sex Ed

Although the majority of legislative sessions have adjourned for the year, 10 regular legislative sessions (CA, DC, IL, MA, MI, NJ, NY, OH, PA, WI) remain active as of August 2024. Therefore, the possibility of enacting legislation to advance sex education continues. However, it will also be important for advocates to remain vigilant about our opposition's agenda especially with a looming election season to come.

## 2024 Elections Watch

On November 5, 2024, presidential, Congressional, gubernatorial, and state legislative elections will be held which could greatly influence the outlook for sex education policy and the future of our country. All 435 seats in the House and 33 seats in the Senate will be up for election. At the state level, 11 states (DE, IN, MO, MT, NH, NC, ND, UT, VT, WA, and WV) will hold gubernatorial elections and 85 out of the 99 state legislative chambers will be holding elections.

This election year presents a fundamental turning point for sex education advocates in ensuring sexual rights are protected and that incoming elected officials are committed towards promoting progressive sexual and reproductive legislation at the state and federal level. SIECUS is closely watching as an overwhelming number of candidates are openly targeting the elimination of the public education system, pledging to erase, censor and even punish LGBTQIA+ individuals, completely eliminate all abortion access, and eliminate insurance coverage of contraception and even access to contraception altogether. These rights are critical to the health and well-being of the next generation of Americans and true equality for all. As sex education provides an upstream solution to many of the aforementioned rights, it is critical that Americans understand candidates' views on sex education as it will be one of many issue areas that will define whether or not elected lawmakers will be committed to empowering young people versus silencing them.

## Opposition Tactics to Look Out For

### *Project 2025 and Opposition's Playbook*

Sex education is no stranger to controversy. Despite its overwhelming popularity across the country and over 30 years of research that demonstrates the positive impacts sex education has, there has been a concentrated effort by an out-spoken and well-funded minority pushing for what has been dubbed "purity culture."

The history of the US is deeply intertwined with puritanism since the beginning of colonialism. However, it wasn't until the culmination of some of the most significant progressive historical acts in the United States – the Civil Rights Act which provided the vote for Black Americans and the desegregation of the public education system, the Supreme Court decision of *Roe v. Wade*, access to the birth control pill, and Women's Liberation Movement – that we see a concentrated and tactical effort by oppositional forces to erase access to sex education. This is because the opposition, which SIECUS has renamed as the Regressive Minority, quickly recognized that sex education is one of the biggest threats to their regressive agenda. Sex education is a foundational solution to helping solve many of the social failings of the US. In recent years, the Regressive Minority has become emboldened and is largely championed by conservative think tanks using Christian fundamentalists as their base.

The success of the Regressive Minority movement is evident in the recent *Dobb's* decision, and numerous regressive fights at the state and federal level not only attacking access to sex education but also attacking intersectional issues such as access to abortion, dismantling LGBTQIA+ rights, pushing for Christian ideology in the secular public school system, attempting to censor books and internet access and more. It is important to remember that the Regressive Minority not only opposes sex education; they also champion failed Sexual Risk Avoidance Education (formerly known as Abstinence-Only until Marriage), instruction that has a long-standing track record of actively harming young people through shame, stigma, and misinformation.



However, most alarmingly, the Heritage Foundation, one of the largest and most well-funded oppositional groups under the Regressive Minority, released a policy agenda called **Project 2025 to guide conservative lawmakers in creating regressive policies across the United States**. While legally the agenda cannot be tied to any specific candidate's campaign, themes highlighted within Project 2025 can be observed in many conservative incumbent and aspiring elected official's campaigns. Additionally, legislation in line with the goals of Project 2025 have already passed in many states, including abortion bans, transgender school sports bans, bills requiring sex and gender to be classified as binary, and much more.

If we closely analyze the Regressive Minority's strategy with the filing of this legislation, we can see that they are clearly working to manipulate America's youth and brainwash them into believing a certain ideology rather than ensuring young people are prepared now and going forward to live healthy lives.

## The Fight to Advance Sex Education Policy, REAHYA, and More

### *Appropriations and The Future of REAHYA*

The fight ahead for adolescent sexual and reproductive health funding in FY25 is expected to be more of the same. Due to the harmful misinformation and disinformation about what sex education actually is and why it's important, support for DASH and especially TPPP remains precarious. While an increase in funding is always the goal, advocates will be focusing on preserving essential adolescent sexual and reproductive health programs for the time being.

Though 2024 is not a REAHYA re-introduction year, it will be vital to start laying out the groundwork for introduction in 2025. Representative Barbara Lee (CA-12), the foremost champion of sex education will be leaving Congress at the beginning of 2025. While her leadership and steadfast support for sex education will be missed, it also means that advocates must cultivate additional Congressional champions for sex education. As we continue to fight to preserve funding for DASH and TPPP, it's critical that we also continue to educate elected officials and the public about sex education more broadly.



## 2024 State Legislation on Our Radar

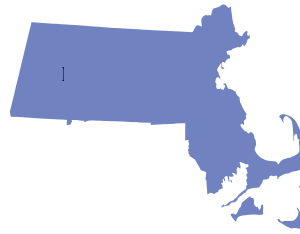
SIECUS continues to monitor state legislation in sessions that remain active. Below are key pieces of legislation that SIECUS is tracking that could change the landscape for sex education.



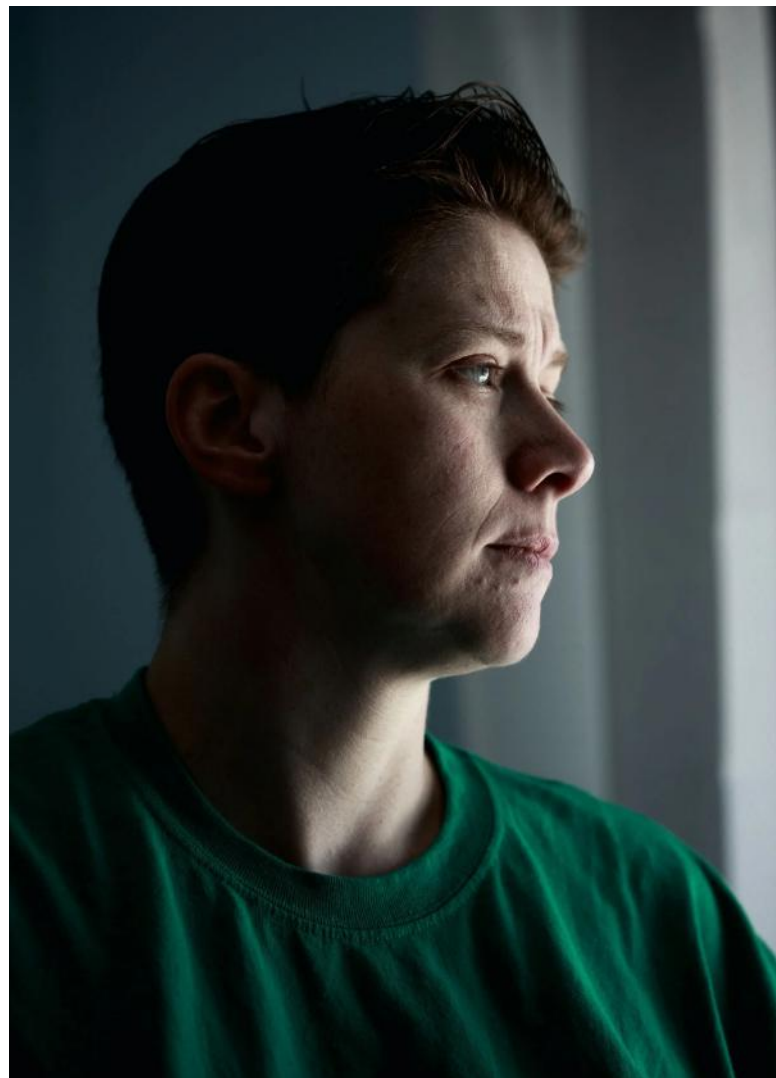
California's [Assembly Bill 2053](#) aims to require state-mandated comprehensive sexual health education and HIV prevention education to also include information about resources available to pupils related to adolescent relationship abuse and intimate partner violence, including the National Domestic Violence Hotline and local domestic violence hotlines. Another bill that has the potential to further improve California's sex education is [Assembly Bill 2229](#) which would include advanced instruction on menstrual health, menstrual disorders, menopause, and more. Both these bills have already passed the first chamber.



Illinois's [Senate Bill 3384](#) would appropriate \$20 million to support school districts and organizations implementing the comprehensive sexual health education in grades 6-12 and comprehensive personal health and safety education in K-5. Funding for sex education is necessary in implementing quality sex education to young people.



Massachusetts [Senate Bill 2694](#) would establish the Healthy Youth Act which would require all school districts to submit a biennial report on their sexual health education. It also requires that schools providing sexual health curriculum to be aligned with Massachusetts Comprehensive Health Curriculum Framework which includes standards in alignment with the National Sex Education Standards. The bill would also create a policy for communicating curriculum and the opt-out process to parents prior to the beginning of the school year. The bill has already passed the Senate and is currently in committee in the House.







Michigan [House Bill 5337](#) would prohibit instruction on HIV/AIDS and reproductive health prior to 4th grade, constituting an early childhood sex education ban. Sex education that is age-appropriate and runs from K-12 grade is essential at building a foundation for overall health and wellness of young people. This bill would hinder access to this transformative and beneficial information.



New York's [Assembly Bill 4604](#) would require comprehensive sex education in grades K-12 which would, at a minimum, align with the National Sex Education Standards. Additionally, [Senate Bill 9331/Assembly Bill 4370](#), would require medically accurate information on transmission and prevention of HIV and AIDS in elementary and secondary school.



New Jersey has several antagonistic bills ([S. 2117](#), [S. 2123/A. 1519](#), [A 670](#), [A 3339](#), [A 2580](#), [A 531](#), [ACR 131](#), [A 1283](#)) that attempt to restrict sex education by rescinding the recently updated Comprehensive Health and Physical Education standards or prohibiting sex education in certain grade levels. These bills are part of a larger effort to wipe out the hard work of New Jersey educators, lawmakers, parents, and students who advocated for an improved sex education curriculum through the updated state learning standards. Thus far, none of these bills have moved.



Pennsylvania's [Senate Bill 293](#) would require consent education in grades K-12 which would be age-appropriate and include positive examples of all individuals and relationships, inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity. Unfortunately, Pennsylvania also has an active "Meet Baby Olivia" bill, [House Bill 2080](#), which would require the video to be shown in biology class.







### Wisconsin's Senate Bill 995

requires school boards to provide human growth and development instruction that is medically accurate and teaches on communication, puberty, pregnancy, reproductive anatomy, contraception, media literacy, and is taught in K-12. Assembly Bill 1107 would take this a step further and require current terminology for human development instruction to be aligned with the National Sex Education Standards and be reviewed every three years. Assembly Bill 526 would extend the anti-discrimination law to private schools and also apply the provision to human growth and development instruction for it to prohibit any discrimination on the basis of gender identity and gender expression. Senate Bill 437 would require instruction on sexual abuse; however, it would also require human growth and development instruction to promote abstinence as the preferred choice and also promote benefits of marriage, which is stigmatizing and perpetuates heteronormativity.

SIECUS and our state partners will work in conjunction to promote these pieces of legislation that have the potential to shift the needle forward on sex education policy and defend against the legislation that threatens to erase the efforts of sex education advocates throughout the remainder of the legislative session.







Building a Movement for Comprehensive Sex Ed

## Sexuality Education Policy Action Council (SEPAC) & Member Support

While each state has their own legislative dynamics with varying challenges and opportunities we have witnessed nationwide attacks on:

*Access to reproductive and gender affirming healthcare and education*

*LGBTQIA+ inclusion in sports, facilities, and the classroom*

*Access to books, factual history, and medically accurate sexuality education*

*Classroom instruction, programming, and general online censorship*

Attacks from all angles at the state and local levels have left advocates feeling isolated, scattered, and spread thin. Recognizing the need for a collective space where advocates, researchers, and educators can share experiences, resources, and shape a common narrative led to SIECUS creating the Sexuality Education Policy Action Council (SEPAC) in 2019.

With over 80 representatives from 30 states SEPAC unites organizations, statewide coalitions, state agencies, school districts, and individual advocates to champion sex education policies aligned with the National Sex Education Standards. Through monthly meetings, SEPAC members gain invaluable advocacy skills, receive timely federal policy updates, training and presentations from movement partners, and networking opportunities with peers. Additionally, SIECUS supports SEPAC partners with a myriad of technical assistance services in three broad categories: policy and legislative support, capacity building and training, and communication and advocacy resources. This can look like SIECUS staff attending and supporting coalition calls, participating in workgroups, providing public comment, testifying, submitting organizational sign-ons, creating talking points, messaging, creating fact sheets, offering advocacy training, brainstorming and strategizing, and developing annual microgrant opportunities.

The SEPAC council recognizes that solidifying sex education policies is a vehicle for social change and that by educating and empowering young people with knowledge about their bodies, autonomy, consent, reproductive decision-making, healthy relationships, sexual orientation and gender identity, menstrual health, and LGBTQIA+ identities - we are ensuring that young people can make safe, healthy, and informed decisions! If you would like to learn more about the SEPAC - please reach out to our State Policy Action Manager, Miranda Estes, at [mestes@siecus.org](mailto:mestes@siecus.org).

## Resources for Advocates

Beyond SEPAC and our technical assistance, SIECUS offers a variety of different resources, publications, and toolkits for advocates looking to learn more or get more involved in the fight for sex education for all at the national level or even within their local communities. As 2024 continues, sex education advocacy through legislative work in remaining active sessions and through community education and mobilization ahead of elections will be crucial to ensuring quality and comprehensive sex education for all.

- Community Action Toolkit provides advocates with a guide on how to build support for advanced sex education in their communities, help implement policies, and promote effective and evidence-based sex education programs that affirm young people's right to education that empowers them to make healthy choices for themselves. This toolkit can be used by parents, teachers, students, health professionals, community or faith leaders, and anyone who is pushing for sex education reform.
- National Standards for Sex Education, most recently updated in 2020, were developed by the Future of Sex Education (FOSE) initiative (FOSE is composed of Advocates for Youth, Answer, and SIECUS: Sex Education for Social Change). This resource can help guide advocates considering sex education curricula to implement in their local schools and community centers. The goal of this publication is to provide clear, consistent, and straight-forward guidance on the essential, minimum, core content, and skills needed for sex education to be effective for K-12 students. More specifically, the NSES addresses the inconsistent implementation of sex education across the country. This resource serves as a means of helping educators improve existing sex education curricula.
- The Healthy Youth Act is a model sex education legislation based on the adoption of the National Sex Education Standards that were developed by SIECUS and its partners at Advocates for Youth, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and Planned Parenthood Federation of America. This model policy assists state legislators to draft bills that establish or amend sex education requirements for youth in their states. For more information regarding the model Healthy Youth Act legislation, please contact Alison Macklin, Policy and Advocacy Director, at [amacklin@siecus.org](mailto:amacklin@siecus.org).
- Professional Learning Standards for Sex Education (PLSSE) is a toolkit that provides guidance to school administrators and classroom educators about the content, skills, and professional disposition needed to implement sex education effectively. The PLSSE can help educators stay up-to-date on content and teaching methods, as information related to sex and research on best practices are frequently changing.
- "The Talk" Survey is a nationwide survey conducted in partnership with Future Method that explores how today's adults view the sex education they received, if any at all. The results uncover gaps in knowledge across the country, the inconsistencies of state sex ed policies, and an overwhelmingly large outcry and need for better sex education for young people.





## ***Resources for Advocates (Cont.)***

- [Defending Access to Inclusive and Affirming Education](#) is SIECUS's policy brief explaining the rise of the Regressive Minority and their opposition to sex education and factual instruction on race, class, and gender, which is represented in the legislation that the movement propagates. For a more comprehensive overview of the Regressive Minority players and the strategies they deploy, check out [Exposing Hate: The Truth about Attacks on Our Kids, Schools, and Diversity](#).
  
- ["If/Then" Series](#) is a series of collaborations between SIECUS and other leading state and national organizations working on LGBTQIA+ issues, abortion policy, sexual violence prevention programming, HIV policy, and more. These briefs highlight the importance of cross-movement efforts between intersecting social justice movements to empower all youth to live healthier and fulfilling lives by receiving education and resources they have a right to.
  
- [Sign up for SIECUS' email list](#) to receive our monthly newsletter, upcoming event invitations, and the latest updates from SIECUS and our partners.



## Concluding Remarks

2024 has been a whirlwind year with an influx of hostile legislation, yet there have also been many wins for sexual and reproductive rights advocates and defeats for our opposition to celebrate. The Regressive Minority introduced 462 restrictive bills this year and 320 of these were defeated. Additionally, only two regressive sex education bills were enacted this year while six progressive sex education bills were signed into law, reflecting what progressive lawmakers and advocates already know: Americans are tired of receiving poor sex education and want better for young people. Moreover, sex education is a winning issue. Even more exciting: some of these positive sex education bills seek to further improve sex education by allocating funding towards programming to ensure that policy is met with equally great implementation.

However, the year is far from over; 47 sex education bills are still active, of which over 50% are restrictive, and could impact the state of sex education in 10 states. With an upcoming intense election season that will seal the fate of Americans for the next four years, it will be vital for sex education advocates to be prepared and ready to face any shift in the sociopolitical landscape for advancing progressive policy.



Therefore, as 2024 continues, the movement for a future where all young people have access to inclusive, affirming, and life-changing sex education continues to grow and the fight for young people's right to knowledge that leads to peak sexual and reproductive well-being moves forward.





## Contact Us!

For additional assistance with advancing sex education in your community during the remainder of the 2024 legislative session, please contact the team at SIECUS at [info@siecus.org](mailto:info@siecus.org).