

April 21, 2021

Dear Commissioners,

My name is Estefania Torres, I am the director of EducaHealth. An organization that teaches sex education and substance abuse prevention in a variety of middle & high schools in the Greater Boston area. I am writing with comments *Mandated Reporter Commission Report Seeking Public Comments*, and specifically want to address the issue addressing underage consensual sexual relations/behavior.

Beginning our sex education lessons by informing students that if they disclose anything that suggests that they are sexually active, we are required to report them as victims of sexual abuse to the administration, will only make them less likely to open up to their educators, which in turn will be a disservice to the open and honest communications that we want to foster in the classroom in order to prevent unwanted pregnancies, STI transmission, and even discussions about relationship abuse, etc.

I strongly recommend you avoid these potential harms by addressing underage non-consensual, *non-abusive*, sexual relationships in any update to the mandated reporter statute. The easiest and most welcome way to do this would be to add a close-in-age exception to MGL ch. 265 § 23, the statutory rape law. More than half of the states in the country have such an exception. Doing this would be an honest step towards improving the mandated reporter law, and keeping young people safe.

Thank you for considering my opinion,

Estefania Torres  
Director & Educator  
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