

On behalf of the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance (MOVA), I am writing to express our support for the Comprehensive Health and Physical Education curriculum framework introduced by Governor Healey and Lieutenant Governor Driscoll. We believe it is a crucial step towards teaching Massachusetts youth healthy practices that will contribute to the state's violence prevention efforts.

MOVA is an independent state agency that strives to advance victim rights by ensuring all victims and survivors of crime across the Commonwealth are supported and empowered through access to high-quality services that are trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and reflective of diverse communities. We achieve this through survivor-informed work, advocacy for enhanced victim rights and services, partnerships with agencies and individuals, and a commitment to providing funding and services for underserved and marginalized communities. MOVA is governed by the Victim and Witness Assistance (VWA) Board, chaired by Attorney General Andrea Campbell, and our current membership includes one district attorney and two public members, one of which is a survivor of crime. This legislative session, **the VWA Board unanimously endorsed H.544/S.268-*An Act relative to healthy youth***, which contains similar provisions to the proposed frameworks.

Universalizing Massachusetts sex education standards to include lessons on consent and healthy relationships will directly contribute to the prevention of sexual assault and domestic violence and future victimization. The framework's emphasis on healthy relationships, emotional and physical health, and identifying trusted adults all contribute to violence prevention of our youth. As an agency that supports and advocates for victims of violent crimes, we believe the proposed frameworks are crucial to improving the health and safety of students in the Commonwealth that will have lasting benefits to our community.

Further, the curricula described in these frameworks will be LGBTQ-inclusive which directly supports MOVA's priority of supporting underserved and marginalized survivors throughout the Commonwealth. The LGBTQIA+ community is one of the most victimized and at-risk groups in

Massachusetts. A 2021 data report by the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth found that LGBTQ high school students are more than two times as likely to have forced sexual intercourse, more than two times as likely to experience physical violence while dating, and almost four times as likely to experience sexual violence while dating, with worse data for transgender youth.¹ National data corroborates this evidence and indicates that sexual violence continues to have a disproportionate impact on LGBTQ students.² The frameworks proposed will increase education and understanding surrounding these communities and their unique needs amongst our youth so that in the future, we can protect and safeguard citizens of all sexual and gender identities from violence throughout the Commonwealth.

MOVA is in full support of these new frameworks that will provide for the prevention of sexual and intimate partner violence in our schools, families, and communities throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. *We respectfully encourage you to please vote to adopt the new comprehensive health and physical education curriculum framework.*

Thank you for your careful consideration of this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly if I can provide any additional information regarding prevention of violence and support of survivors in our school systems throughout Massachusetts.

Sincerely,



LIAM T. LOWNEY
Executive Director

¹ Massachusetts Commission on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning Youth. (2020). Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth: 2021 Report and Recommendations. Retrieved from <https://www.mass.gov/annual-recommendations>, pg. 34.

² Ibid, pg. 58.