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Betsy Butler

March 13, 2018

The Honorable Shirley Weber

California State Assembly

State Capitol, Room 3123

Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support AB 2601 – Sexual health education in charter schools

Dear Assemblymember Weber,

On behalf of the California Women's Law Center (CWLC), we write in support of Assembly Bill 2601, which would make the California Healthy Youth Act (CHYA) applicable to charter schools across the state. AB 2601 will ensure that the guidelines for sexual health education in public schools established by CHYA also apply in charter schools while maintaining significant flexibility for charter schools to decide what curriculum they adopt and which grades to provide instruction for.

Research shows that sexual health education addressing issues of gender and power leads to better youth health outcomes. More than half of California students are sexually active in the 12th grade, California's growing STI rates are highest in young people ages 15-24, and nearly 12% and 10% of California high school students experience sexual dating violence and physical dating violence, respectively. A recent study found that between 2015 (when CHYA was enacted) and 2017, the percentage of sexually active California students who used birth control increased, and the percentage of students who engaged in sexual activity with multiple partners decreased. AB 2601 will ensure the positive effects of CHYA will extend to students attending charter schools in California.

California has 1,275 charter schools that serve 10% of California's student population. Charter schools educate a diverse and often underserved student population: 59% of students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch and 72% are students of color. Quality sex education is especially critical for low-income communities and communities of color affected by systemic discrimination, poverty, lack of access to health care and lifelong health disparities.

CWLC's mission is to advance the potential of women and girls through transformative litigation, policy advocacy, and education. We prioritize educating youth regarding their sexual and reproductive health and believe no student should lack access to quality sexual health education because of their income, race or location.

For these reasons, the California Women's Law Center is pleased to support AB 2601.

Sincerely,



Betsy Butler
Executive Director

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