

**Testimony of Sola Stamm, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest**

before

The New York City Council Committees on Health, Education and Women's Issues

regarding

Sex Education in NYC Schools**Int. No. 952, Int. No. 957, Int. No. 711.**October 27th, 2015

Good afternoon Chairman Dromm, Chairman Johnson, Chairwoman Cumbo and members of the Committees and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Sola Stamm and I am a Health Justice Community Organizer at the New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI), a non-profit, civil rights organization. NYLPI's Health Justice Program uses a wide range of advocacy tools, including community organizing, coalition building, individual representation, impact litigation, and legislative advocacy, to challenge health disparities. With these advocacy strategies, we aim to eliminate racial discrimination and systemic barriers that limit universal access to health care as well as address social determinants of health so that all New Yorkers can live a healthy life.

Advocacy around the pursuit for holistic health and wellness for New Yorkers can be seen through our support of City Council legislation on Intro 644. This legislation promotes children's health, focus and academic performance through physical education. Organizing around Intro 644 led to NYLPI's partnership with SEANYC and its work to promote comprehensive, medically accurate and age appropriate sexual health education throughout New York City Public Schools.

While New York City is a leader in many areas of reproductive health advocacy, and the Department of Education recommends that middle and high school students receive sexual health education, it has been reported that some students have not received any form of sexual health education. With this in consideration, it is clear that measures need to be taken to ensure that New York City youth are receiving the sexual health education that they deserve and that implementation of the recommended curriculum is meaningful and consistent.

The goal of the bills before you is to ensure that NYC sexual health education is properly tracked and evaluated. Passing these bills would be a proactive first step toward ensuring that sexual health education is, in fact, taking place in our schools. It would also ensure that critical health information reaches all NYC youth regardless of what school they attend within the five Boroughs. We are encouraged by the administrative and City Council efforts to improve access to sexual health education throughout the city: such as the de Blasio administration's commitment of new resources that support educators' professional development and school wellness councils. We are also encouraged by the bills

before you today, and hope that future efforts will be made to address the need for comprehensive sexual health education that reflect the realities of New York City youth.

NYLPI echo's NARAL Pro-Choice in recommending that Chancellor Carmen Farina pass a Chancellor's Regulation requiring comprehensive sexual health education that reflects the National Sexuality Education Standards for kindergarteners through 12th graders. Further, NYLPI supports comprehensive sex education legislation that is inclusive to all sexualities and genders, is taught by trained instructors, connects students to local health care centers and resources, is culturally competent, medically accurate and provides guidance through the topics of autonomy and healthy relationships.

The New York City Council has demonstrated its commitment to reproductive health advocacy through the introduction of bills such as the ones before you today. Passage of Intro No. 952, Int. No. 957 and Int. No. 771 is a necessary preliminary measure to ensuring that appropriate sexual health education is delivered to all students. The New York Lawyers for the Public Interest thanks the Council for holding this hearing and for its commitment to the health of New York City youth and we urge you to pass these pieces of legislation.

Sincerely,

Sola Stamm