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THE PUBLIC POLICY VOICE OF THE CHURCH

September 8, 2020

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Texas State Board of Education
William B. Travis Building
1701 N. Congress Avenue, Austin, Texas

Submitted via email to: teks@tea.texas.gov; sboesupport@tea.texas.gov

Dear Texas State Board of Education,

My name is Shannon Jaquette and I am the policy and education analyst at Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops. I am testifying on behalf of the bishops and personally as a mother of four children, three of whom have graduated from Austin ISD schools. We are opposed to the adoption of the proposed K-12 TEKS for Health Education due to the Reproductive and Sexual Health Strand.

We are living in a hypersexualized society and children from a very young age are bombarded with sexual messages and imagery that encourages objectification and exploitation. This curriculum opens the door for graphic discussions of sexual activity that are not age appropriate and are presented in a way that does not address the totality and dignity of the human person.

Parents are the primary educators of their children and it is their right and responsibility to impart their values in all aspects of their children's education. The state should not undermine this role and must have express permission from parents regarding sexuality education. Therefore, parents should be given the opportunity to OPT IN rather than opt out. It is critical that parents are made aware of and have ample time to review the complete sex ed curriculum.

Also, by adopting these standards statewide, the state would be usurping local control and the right of communities to determine what sex education content is taught, if any at all. And although these standards could be worse, they set the stage for increasingly problematic content and ideological and agenda-driven curricula.

While it's reassuring that the proposed recommendations continue to stress abstinence as the only 100% effective method for avoiding pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and harm to children's emotional development, we urge the board to reject the reproductive and sexual health standards in order to preserve parental and local autonomy.

Sincerely,
Shannon Jaquette
Policy and Education Analyst, Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops