



Massachusetts Catholic Conference
66 Brooks Drive
Braintree, MA 02184
617-748-5630
www.macatholic.org

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

To: Joint Committee on Education

From: James F. Driscoll, Esq., Executive Director

Re: House Bill 2053 and Senate Bill 234, "An Act relative to healthy youth."

Date: April 14, 2017

The Massachusetts Catholic Conference ("Conference") respectfully submits this testimony in opposition to two bills being heard today before this committee that would instruct that health education be consistent with the Massachusetts Comprehensive Health Curriculum Framework ("Frameworks") developed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Department of Public Health.

House Bill 2053, and Senate Bill 234 direct local school districts to utilize the Frameworks as a guide in the development and selection of curriculum, textbooks, and instructional materials in regards to sexuality and health education.

The Conference generally supports the inclusion of health education in schools. Many of the topics covered by the Frameworks provide information vital to the physical and mental wellbeing of children and are inherently noncontroversial. However, with respect to the controversial topic of sexuality education, including, but not limited to, the topics of contraception and abortion, the Conference maintains it is parents that have the crucial and irreplaceable responsibility and role in their children's moral development generally and in particular in the delicate area of human sexuality.

Regarding the current "opt-out" provision, the Conference believes that requiring parents to "opt-in" is the better approach as this method allows parents to strengthen their role as the primary teacher of their children. The opt-in approach also provides parents notification that this topic is being taught to their children; the above-referenced legislation only requires that materials to be covered in the classroom be made available for inspection "to the extent practicable." Quite often today parents are unaware of what is being taught in the classroom. Additionally, the Conference does not support funding for sexuality education that is contrary to the core values of many tax paying residents. Based upon the aforementioned reasons, the Conference respectfully asks the Committee to report these bills as "ought not to pass."

The Massachusetts Catholic Conference is the public policy office of the Roman Catholic Bishops in the Commonwealth, representing the Archdiocese of Boston and the Dioceses of Fall River, Springfield, and Worcester.