

Professional right-wing activist comes to Helena to Divide Community Local Helena groups urge community to examine Grossman

(Helena, MT) – Today, an out-of-state activist will travel to Helena to push an anti-sex education agenda and attempt to further divide our community over this important public health issue. Leaders of the Montana Partnership for Sex Education called on the Helena community to do some homework when it comes to today's presentation by Dr. Miriam Grossman. Dr. Grossman's opinions on comprehensive sex education are contrary to the well established position of the medical and educational community. Instead of attending this lecture, the Montana Partnership for Sex Education is asking community members to consider staying home and talking to their kids about sex and their values around family and relationships.

Known nationally for her opposition to all elements of a good sex education curriculum, Dr. Grossman is not in line with the Helena community when it comes to addressing the issues of teen pregnancy and STD rates.

"Dr. Grossman is a professional anti-sex education activist whose opinions are wildly out of step with the mainstream medical and educational community," said Kim Abbott, Program Director at the Montana Human Rights Network. "We believe that when Helenans take a look at the extensive list of medical and educational associations who have endorsed the type of curriculum that Helena Public Schools is considering, they'll want to support solid, comprehensive sex education for youth in our community."

The medical and education community has long-supported programs that stress the benefits of abstinence, but also provide young people with information about contraception and disease prevention.

"Planned Parenthood of Montana believes that age-appropriate, medically accurate information regarding health and sexuality helps students make responsible, informed decisions, which ultimately protects public health and saves Montana taxpayers millions of dollars in costs associated with teen pregnancy and birth," said Jill Baker, Director of Education for Planned Parenthood of Montana.

The Helena community has an opportunity to improve upon the existing Health curriculum and further address issues of dating violence, bullying, healthy relationships, teen pregnancy and rising STD rates. After fourteen years of steady decline, in 2006, Montana experienced a 3.2% jump in teen pregnancy and a 9% increase in teen births, one of the highest increases in the nation. Additionally, 33% of Montana teens who had a pregnancy indicated they had a prior pregnancy.

Nationally, approximately one quarter of all new cases of STDs occur among teenagers. In Montana, 36% of all Chlamydia cases and 29% of all gonorrhea cases occur in youth ages 15 to 19. In Lewis and Clark County, 40% of Chlamydia cases were in youth ages 14-18.

"Our youth need and deserve the truth about their bodies and sex. Helena's proposed curriculum gives them the information they need to maintain healthy bodies and healthy relationships. To offer them anything less is shortchanging their futures, said Niki Zupanic, Public Policy Director at the ACLU of Montana."

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