

Senate Education Committee

Ryan Meleedy 271-4151

HB 667-FN, relative to health education and requiring the viewing of certain videos demonstrating gestational development from embryo to fetus through birth by public school students.

Hearing Date: April 2, 2025

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Ward, Sullivan, Abbas, Prentiss and Altschiller

Members of the Committee Absent : None

Bill Analysis: This bill specifies required instruction under the public school health curriculum and requires public school students to watch a simulated or ultrasound video demonstrating gestational development.

Sponsors:

Rep. Sellers

Rep. Panek

Rep. Seidel

Rep. Aures

Rep. Ulery

Rep. Perez

Who supports the bill: 5 People signed in support of HB 667-FN. To see the full list of sign-ins, please email the committee aide (ryan.meleedy@gc.nh.gov).

Who opposes the bill: 297 People signed in opposition of HB 667-FN. To see the full list of sign-ins, please email the committee aide (ryan.meleedy@gc.nh.gov).

Who is neutral on the bill: 1 Person signed in neutrality to HB 667-FN. To see the full list of sign-ins, please email the committee aide (ryan.meleedy@gc.nh.gov).

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Representative Glenn Cordelli

- Representative Cordelli testified in support of House Bill 667-FN and spoke specifically on the amendment that was adopted by the house.
- Representative Cordelli explained that the bill mostly repeats what is already in statute and administrative rules, explaining that sexual education should be age-appropriate and medically accurate.
- He highlighted that the bill's mention of abstinence and healthy relationships are already part of the state's pre-established standards of sexual education.

- He explained that the use of a computer-generated, medically accurate video detailing fetal development would clarify the growth and development of children for students.
- He classified the bill as simple legislation that provides essential guidance for schools teaching students about human development in sexual education.
- Senator Altschiller explained that RSA 189:10 contains a lot of other provisions that weren't part of the amendment, such as hygiene, sexual violence prevention, child abuse, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STD), and personal finance literacy instruction. She questioned why the bill only includes certain references to RSA 189:10 but leaves out other seemingly important things. Representative Cordelli explained that his amendment only added a paragraph to the bill, but didn't repeal any other language.
- Senator Altschiller inquired about the rules that Representative Cordelli mentioned, asking for their location. He replied that they are in the administrative rules.
- Senator Altschiller questioned why, if the language was already included in the administrative rules, it had to be added into statute. Representative Cordelli explained that it is beneficial for rules to have a basis in statute, which was the motivation behind his amendment.
- Senator Prentiss suggested that if the legislature feels that putting these teen pregnancy prevention measures into law is necessary, all proven measures for this prevention should be included, not just things like abstinence and healthy relationships. Representative Cordelli explained that the full list of measures is already established in the administrative rules and offered to send the rules to the committee following the hearing's conclusion.
- Senator Altschiller referenced lines 5 and 6 of the bill, which outlined the requirement of showing students the aforementioned computer-generated video of gestation and fetal development. She questioned what the source of these videos would be. Representative Cordelli said that he knew of multiple examples of such videos available.
- Senator Altschiller asked whether the decision to select the video would be left up to the Department of Education (DOE) or local school districts. Representative Cordelli viewed this as a local decision. Senator Altschiller questioned whether the DOE would take part in presenting different vendors for local school districts to select or if school districts would be left to select the video independently. Representative Cordelli explained that he had not addressed this with the DOE yet.
- Senator Altschiller referenced line 4 of the bill, reiterating Senator Prentiss' inquiry as to why certain teen pregnancy prevention methods were left out of the legislation while only including more traditional methods, such as

abstinence. Representative Cordelli explained that some of the teen pregnancy prevention methods that Senator Altschiller referred to, such as birth control, are already part of health standards.

- Senator Sullivan asked if teachers have been using YouTube and other internet resources to supplement curriculums since the introduction of Common Core in New Hampshire. Representative Cordelli understood this to be the case.
- Senator Prentiss asked why other forms of teen pregnancy prevention methods wouldn't be included in the bill, considering its prescriptive nature for the certain ones mentioned in the bill. Representative Cordelli explained that sexual education programs that detail different prevention methods are already in place and that the intent of this bill, specifically the house amendment he drafted, is just to solidify specific methods he viewed as necessary in statute.
- Senator Prentiss questioned if Representative Cordelli felt that *all* forms of birth control were important. Representative Cordelli expressed belief in the importance of contraceptive awareness for students in high school as an alternative to abstinence.
- Senator Altschiller established that one of the primary functions of sexual education is providing a broad base of knowledge for sexual health and teen pregnancy prevention. She questioned why abortion, which she established as a form of reproductive health care, is not part of the language in the bill. Representative Cordelli stated that he does not consider abortion as reproductive health care. Senator Prentiss and Senator Altschiller expressed disagreement with Representative Cordelli's personal classification of abortion, citing health care professionals' general disagreement.
- Senator Altschiller stated that public school students would be receiving a limited, narrowly targeted sexual education, which could lead to more negative outcomes for young adults and worsening teen pregnancy rates.
- Senator Ward redirected the committee's attention to an alternative interpretation of the bill, establishing that this bill is not a broad sexual education bill, but rather legislation focused on education of the gestational process. She implied that the scope to which the bill was being viewed was wider than its actual intention. Senator Sullivan concurred with Senator Ward's comments.
- Senator Prentiss agreed with the importance of the bill's focus on educating students about gestation but explained that since the legislation would also put sexual health curriculum into statute, there is a need for that specific language to be all-encompassing.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition:

Representative Hope Damon – Former Diabetes Educator

- Representative Damon testified in opposition to the bill.
- She explained that the bill would violate the state government's long-standing respect for local control of curriculum by requiring schools to teach something specific that they might not have otherwise taught.
- She cited the prime sponsor's characterization of the bill, stating that its purpose is to teach students about gestational development. Considering this apparent intent, she questioned why the bill would include any mention of abstinence, adoption, healthy relationships, or any other form of birth control.
- She stated that if the pregnancy prevention measures *must* be included in the bill, then all other measures should also be included.
- She took issue with the auditing requirement that the bill proposed, which would force the DOE to audit each school's compliance with the bill's requirements. She explained that the DOE is not asked to audit any other form of curriculum in schools and questioned why this particular requirement would warrant such auditing.
- Representative Damon described House Bill 667 as fiscally irresponsible, elaborating that the bill would force spending on the gestational videos during a budget crisis.
- She posed multiple questions about the gestational video requirements, asking what threshold the videos would need to meet to be considered 'high quality', if animated videos are able to be 'scientifically accurate' as the bill would mandate them to be, if the videos are biologically clear or if they are distorted, and whether the videos would actually be appropriate for students to view. She added that, by definition, the term "high quality" does not constitute 'factual'.
- Senator Altschiller inquired about the auditing requirement that Representative Damon brought up, asking for further clarification about the standard procedure for other academic disciplines and whether or not they are audited. Representative Damon explained that though schools are held accountable to some degree about the quality of their education, there is no academic discipline, such as math or science, that requires an audit from the DOE on the basis that this bill would designate for its specific sexual education requirements.
- Senator Sullivan asked if Representative Damon was aware that by law, the DOE surveys schools every biennium. Representative Damon said that if there is already an audit of school curriculum every biennium, these supposed audits and the one the bill outlines are still nonsensical.

- Senator Altschiller asked if there is any distinction between a survey and an audit, citing the fact that 4th graders throughout the state are surveyed every year. Representative Damon explained that she was not qualified to provide a definitive answer. However, she explained that a survey is seemingly less precise than an official audit.

Representative Tracy Bricchi

- Representative Bricchi highlighted an inconsistency between the bill's title and its language, explaining that the title describes the gestational video as "embryo, to fetus, to birth" whereas the language on line 7 of the bill describes "early fetal development".
- She added that when she receives an audit, as the chair of her local school board, it comes with things that need to be fixed, whereas a survey does not.
- She added to Representative Damon's point that the bill shouldn't include birth control methods if its purpose is to educate students about gestation. She explained that the mention of adoption could be permissible, as it is related to the birth of a child, but that healthy relations and abstinence were off-topic and therefore unnecessary to be included.

Neutral Information Presented:

Hon. Jerry Knirk – Former New Hampshire Representative and Orthopedic Spine Surgeon

- Jerry Knirk emphasized the need for comprehensive sexual education in schools.
- He stated that the bill needs to be amended to meet the "comprehensive" standard he spoke about, explaining that the bill only includes certain measures for pregnancy prevention but not others, such as birth control or abortion.
- He analogized this bill to his own experience as a physician, explaining that when he met with patients, he made sure that they knew about all of the options that were available to them, not just surgery. He added that it would be medical malpractice if he hadn't provided this information. He explained that the bill is effectively choosing to only tell its patients about the option of surgery, without providing other medical alternatives.
- He believed that the bill was partially stripping students of their ability to make informed decisions about their sexual health and pregnancy prevention.
- He cautioned the committee about bills that contain lists of things, such as pregnancy prevention methods like the ones that this bill lists. He acknowledged that the bill does not preclude schools from educating students about the unmentioned forms of pregnancy prevention, but viewed the presence

of a few specific methods in the bill's language as a need to include those missing from it.

- He described the bill's requirement of schools showing a video detailing gestation as important but said that it falls short of other sexual education topics that are of equal importance, such as pregnancy itself, as opposed to only including gestation.
- He said that he would be in favor of the bill passing if it is amended to include all methods of pregnancy prevention as part of a comprehensive sexual education requirement.
- Senator Altschiller asked Mr. Knirk to provide further details regarding his analogy of medical care in relation to the bill's language. Mr. Knirk explained a hypothetical scenario where a patient was suffering from a medical issue that surgery could potentially fix, yet not doing surgery would also be an option among many others. He explained that the essence of his point is that when presenting students with pregnancy prevention and sexual health options, the complete list of options should be presented so that a student can make educated decisions about their sexual health, just as the patient would in his hypothetical scenario having been informed of all medical options available.