

Statement of Janet Kotowski

October 11, 2007

To: Montgomery County Board of Education

Good evening, my name is Janet Kotowski. My youngest daughter is in the 10th grade and currently enrolled in health class.

I have looked at the 2 lessons from the pilot Family Life unit that was published on the BOE website after the January 7th meeting. After reviewing the material in those lessons, I feel there are weakness in the the curriculum and hope the finial version has addressed these areas of concern.

First: I am concerned the curriculum contains inaccurate information with no basis on scientific evidence. For example, the curriculum assertion that "sexual orientation is innate" is in direct conflict with the recent ruling by the Maryland Court of Appeals (*Conaway, et al. v. Deane, et al.*) which did not "recognize sexual orientation as an immutable trait." My concern with this is that, at a time when children are exploring their own identity, these lessons will encourage adolescents to prematurely misidentify their sexual orientation based on momentary feelings and inaccurate classroom material.

Second, I am concerned this curriculum is leaving out important information on health risks regrading alternate lifestyles. No matter what sexual orientation a student ultimately chooses, they need accurate and complete information to make wise decisions and avoid life threatening illnesses. In January 2007, the board was presented with a petition signed by 270 doctors in Montgomery county, warning that these lessons are inadequate to inform students of health risks. Thus, this places our children at greater risk by leaving out important and vital health information.

Finally, I am concerned that parents do not have access to the entire health curriculum and will not be able to make informed decisions regarding their child's participation. Unlike other curriculum offered in the county, the health unit is not available online through MCPS for me or any other parent to review. Neither is the alternative lesson plans to be assigned to students who do not 'opt-in' to this program. Parents are only offered the opportunity to review the material two weeks prior to the presentation of the unit to students. Since the finial version of the Family Life and Human Development unit was approved during the July 12th BOE meeting, I cannot understand why the board is not making the information available to parents upon request. Material that the BOE has deemed appropriate for our children should not be withheld from parents.

It is vitally important that all parents be allowed to review the compete Family Life and Human Development curriculum – including alternative lesson plans – to be informed about their choices regarding their child's participation in this unit. This material should be made available on the curriculum website as are other classes. This will enable easy access for parents who work and cannot review the material during the day at their child's school. Withholding curriculum material from parents that has already been approved is unacceptable and disrespectful to the parents of this county. I look forward to hearing from the BOE directly on how I and other parents can have immediate access to this curriculum material.

Respectfully,
Janet Kotowski