



March 1, 2024

Senator Cwodzinski
Chair, Senate Education Policy Committee
Senate Office Building
St. Paul, MN

Dear Chair and Senators,

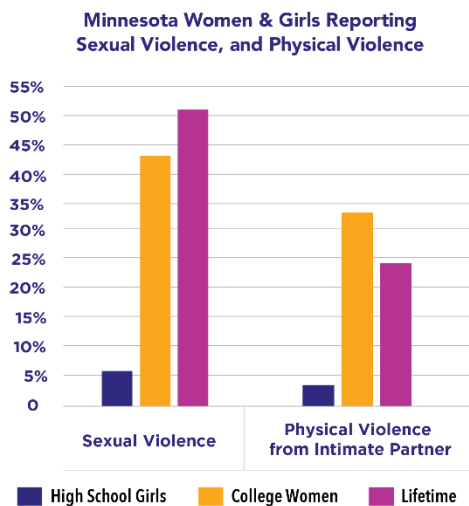
On behalf of the Women's Foundation of Minnesota, I write to express our support for SF 3746, which ensures students across Minnesota will have the opportunity to learn what they need to grow up safe, healthy, and confident. Current health education standards are not set at the state level, which means that where you live in Minnesota determines what you learn about essential topics like violence prevention, substance use, mental health, and reproductive health.

At the Women's Foundation of Minnesota, we are deeply committed to advancing gender equity and supporting initiatives that allow women and girls to be healthy, successful, and safe. Students in schools should have access to information, free of judgment, and able to ask questions in a classroom that encourages learning and curiosity. Unfortunately, this has not been the case for many students across the state when it comes to learning about health. Not every student can access information at home or elsewhere, online information sources are unreliable, and so families consistently rely on schools to offer access to accurate information that helps students grow and have their questions about health answered.

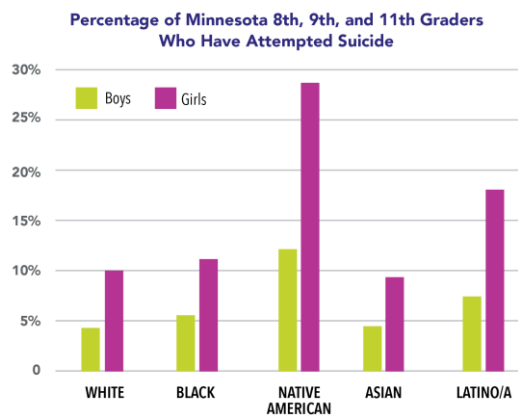
We collaborate with the Center on Women, Gender, & Public Policy at the Humphrey School, and produce the state's leading research on the well-being of women and girls in the state. In this year's report, data shows that Black, Indigenous, and women and girls of color, and women and girls in Greater Minnesota disproportionately experience negative health and safety outcomes that are preventable. A few important data points support the need for broad health education in schools:

- Sixteen percent (16%) of 11th grade girls report sexual abuse.
- The 10 places with the highest teen birth rates are all in Greater MN.
- Anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination persists in Minnesota schools, where 1 in 2 (52%) of students experience at least one form of discrimination which has increased since 2019 (31%).

- Minnesota's 9th grade girls (60%) are almost twice as likely to have serious attempts at suicide than boys (34%).
- Teen girls are less likely to be physically active and participate in sports than their male counterparts.



CWGPP analysis of Minnesota Student Survey 2022, College Student Health Survey 2023, and National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey 2015.



CWGPP analysis of 2022 Minnesota Student Survey Data.

The data in this report illustrates the need for a consistent health standard across the state of Minnesota. Minnesota youth deserve accurate, age-appropriate, and inclusive health education that equips them with the knowledge and skills they need to make informed decisions about their bodies and relationships. With a statewide health education standard, students across the state will have access to the same comprehensive knowledge about issues that affect their daily lives.

We urge you to pass this proposal to ensure students in Minnesota have access to education on health subjects that will allow them to live full and healthy lives. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gloria Perez
President and CEO
Women's Foundation of Minnesota