March XX, 2025

The Honorable Sasha Renée Pérez

Chair, Senate Education Committee

State Capitol, Room 6740

Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Caroline Menjivar

Chair, Senate Health Committee

State Capitol, Room 3310

Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: SB 608 (Menjivar) - Youth Equity + Access - SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Pérez and Chair Menjivar,

I am writing on behalf of [Organization] to express support for SB 608 - Youth Equity + Access Act. The measure seeks to address the sexually transmitted infection (STI) epidemic among California youth and improve public health outcomes by expanding access to condoms in schools and communities, and empowering the California Department of Education to monitor compliance with the California Healthy Youth Act.

[Organization description]

**California youth need comprehensive sex education to make informed decisions about their health and bodies.** According to [Sex Ed for Social Change (SIECUS)](https://siecus.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/California-State-Profile.pdf), advocates report implementation of the existing sex education mandate and the lack of broad health education requirements continue to create barriers to sex education for young people in California. The California Healthy Youth Act, which went into effect in 2016, requires California public schools to provide comprehensive, inclusive, and age-appropriate sexual health education to students in middle and high school. However, it is reported that more rural and low-income communities lack support in implementing curriculum.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that [one in five people](https://www.cdc.gov/sti/php/communication-resources/prevalence-incidence-and-cost-estimates.html) in the United States have an STI. In 2023, 297,940 Californians [contracted syphilis, chlamydia, or gonorrhea](https://www.cdc.gov/sti-statistics/annual/summary.html). Statewide data show over one-half of all STIs in the state can be attributed to Californians between 15 and 24 years of age. Most STIs go undetected and can lead to serious, life-threatening health problems later in life, including permanent tissue damage, blindness, infertility, and cancer related to human papillomavirus (HPV) infections.

California youth, and in particular youth of color, are disproportionately affected by the STI crisis. Young people report experiencing difficulties while attempting to purchase condoms at some pharmacies and retailers, including being judged, shamed, or harassed, or being asked to show an identification card despite the fact that there are no age requirements for condom purchases. Through Essential Access Health’s TeenSource Condom Access Project, young people reported that cost is another obstacle to obtaining condoms. When cost barriers remain, youth with low incomes are often left without the option to regularly use condoms to help protect their health and prevent an unintended pregnancy from occurring.

Condoms are an effective tool to reduce STI transmission, but condom use among sexually active young people has declined and the ongoing access barriers contribute to this decline. The [CDC’s Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System](https://www.cdc.gov/yrbs/dstr/index.html) shows that in 2023, an average of 21 percent of California high school pupils were sexually active and 52 percent of those pupils did not use condoms during their last sexual intercourse.

**To support youth health and wellness, promote health equity, and curb STI transmission among California young people, SB 608 will:**

* Prohibit pharmacies and retailers from requiring customers to present identification for condom or non-prescription contraception purchases;
* Provide the California Department of Education the authority to monitor compliance of the California Healthy Youth Act; and
* Bar public schools serving grades 7-12 from prohibiting school-based health centers from making internal and external condoms available and easily accessible to pupils at school-based health center sites, and from prohibiting condom distribution in the context of educational and public health program initiatives (i.e. sex education, classes by community partners, peer health programs, campus health fairs, or distributed by school-based health staff).

California cannot afford inaction. SB 608 is a necessary, evidence-based solution to protect California youth and promote health equity.

For these reasons, [Organization] is proud to support SB 608 and respectfully urges an “AYE” vote when the measure comes before the committee.

Sincerely,

[NAME]

[TITLE]

[ORGANIZATION]