



TESTIMONY
House Public Education Committee
HB 741 and HB 1567
March 31, 2009

The League of Women Voters of Texas (LWV-TX) **strongly supports HB 741(Castro) and HB 1567 (Villarreal)**, that aim to improve sexuality education in Texas public schools and address the state's alarming rate of teenage births and STI's. LWV-TX is a nonpartisan, political organization with 32 local Leagues across the state. The League believes that enactment of these measures would decrease the incidence of teen pregnancy and parenthood and STI's. These measures would also promote self-sufficiency and reduce poverty among children and families.

HB 741, known as Education Works, would ensure that Texas schools teach sexual health with a medically accurate and balanced approach – teaching abstinence along with facts about contraception and responsible decision making. HB 1567 would require instruction on contraceptive use to be scientifically accurate when it is taught as part of a school's sexual health curriculum. It would also prohibit schools from discouraging contraceptive use.

Currently, Texas schools fail to give young people the complete and accurate information they need to stay healthy, putting teens at risk. Texas has the highest rate of births and repeat births to teenagers in the nation, and nearly half of all new cases of STI's occur among youths ages 15-24. Teens need reliable information to protect themselves from the life-long consequences of unintended pregnancies and STI's. HB 741 and HB 1567 would provide them with this information.

The League thanks the House Public Education Committee for your leadership in giving an early hearing to these measures that are very important to and strongly supported by our members. We hope that their passage will be a priority for the Texas Legislature during this session.