



**Testimony**  
**SB 5629 - Federal Funding for Abstinence Only Programs**  
**House Healthcare and Wellness Committee**  
**March 19, 2009**

Chairperson Cody and members of the Committee, my name is Kim Sheley and I am testifying on behalf of the Washington State Catholic Conference, which represents the Catholic Bishops of Washington State on public policy issues.

The Catholic Church has long maintained that human sexuality is a beautiful gift from God, lovingly designed to be naturally unitive and procreative. In our Catholic schools we teach our children about human sexuality, placing it in the larger context of the dignity of the human person and our call to be in relationship with each other. Sexual intimacy between a man and a woman, enjoyed within the context of marriage, not only reinforces emotional closeness, but may allow a couple to participate with our Creator in the generation of life itself. And of course this “miracle of life” gives rise to families, the fundamental building blocks of vibrant, healthy societies.

Sadly, in the last few decades, we have come to devalue both life and families. Today education about human sexuality can be a purely scientific exercise, with a keen focus on the avoidance or destruction of the “negative consequences” of sexual acts. But separating the science of human sexuality from the moral fabric in which it is enmeshed erodes our human dignity, and ultimately works against our shared goals of making healthy choices as individuals and as a society.

Often misunderstood, abstinence education simply affirms the natural beauty of human sexuality and procreation. Helping individuals to more deeply appreciate the significance of their sexuality and to reflect on how their actions affect them, their families and their communities empowers them to make healthy decisions about their sexual behavior.

The Washington State Catholic Conference opposes SB 5629 which makes optional the requirement that the Department of Health shall maximize federal funding for abstinence education programs as this might limit the options that parents have in the education of their children about human sexuality.

We believe that human sexuality education programs must provide age appropriate material, and place human sexuality in the context of the inherent dignity of each person. Scientific information must of course be accurate, but scientific information cannot and should not be the sole content of any sexuality education program. A balanced and comprehensive view of sexuality, taught first in the home, focuses on its physical, emotional, and spiritual components. This helps children and adults make fully informed and healthy decisions about this important facet of human existence.

Thank you for your consideration.