April 16, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL
The Honorable Doug Ducey
Governor of Arizona
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dear Governor Ducey:

On behalf of the Arizona Medical Association (ArMA), the Arizona Academy of Family Physicians (AzAFP), the Arizona Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics (AzAAP) and the Arizona Section of American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (AzACOG), we urge you to veto SB1456 (sex education instruction; parent rights). If signed into law this bill would negatively impact the health and safety of Arizona’s students by preventing medically accurate and appropriate sexuality education.

Developmentally appropriate and evidence-based education about human sexuality and sexual reproduction provided by pediatricians, schools, other professionals, and parents is important to help children and adolescents make informed, positive, and safe choices about healthy relationships, responsible sexual activity, and their reproductive health. Comprehensive sexuality education has been shown to help to prevent and reduce the risks of adolescent pregnancy, HIV, and sexually transmitted infections for children and adolescents. These programs in the schools deliver positive outcomes such as delay in the initiation and reduction in the frequency of sexual intercourse, a reduction in the number of sexual partners, and an increase in condom use. Some studies also have shown less truancy and an improvement in academic performance in those who have taken sexuality education courses.

Sexuality education should begin in early childhood and continue through a person’s lifespan. Programs have been shown to be most effective when parents can select to opt their children out of instruction. Programs should not only focus on reproductive development prevention of STIs/HIV, and unintended pregnancy, but also teach about forms of sexual expression, gender identity, healthy sexual and nonsexual relationships, communication, recognizing and preventing sexual violence, consent, and decision making. They also should include state-specific legal ramifications of sexual behavior and the growing risks of sharing information online.

Creating access to medically accurate comprehensive sexuality education by using an evidence-based curriculum and reducing sociodemographic disparities in its receipt remain a primary goal for improving the well-being of teenagers and young adults. Ideally, this education happens conjointly in the home and in the school.
SB1456 impedes access to this important education and is harmful to an adolescents/student’s health and further it promotes curriculum that excludes LGBTQ students creating unsafe school environments. The coalition of physician groups comprised of ArMA, AzAFP, AzAAP and AzACOG urge you to veto SB1456 to protect the health and safety of all of Arizona’s students.

Sincerely,

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President, Arizona Medical Association

Laura Mercer, MD, FACOG
Chair, AZ-Section American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

William Thrift, MD
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cc: Daniel Scarpinato Christina Corieri, Kaitlin Harrier