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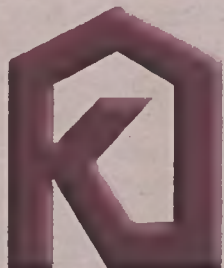


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## Editor's Note

by Matt Comer . Q-Notes staff

### 'Compromise' bill leaves much to be desired



mitted relationships" — a move opening the door to finally recognizing and validating the very real lives of LGBT students practically ignored in the state's current sex education curriculum.

On April 16, the North Carolina House approved HB 88, the Healthy Youth Act. Advocates had hoped the bill would transform the state's sex education curriculum by changing the sex ed default from an abstinence-only approach to one more comprehensive and accurate. However, the bill advocates had originally hoped for, isn't the bill they got. Despite the praise heaped upon the bill's "success" in the House, the plain truth of the matter is that the resulting bill amounts to nothing more than an anti-climactic letdown.

Ian Palmquist, EqualityNC executive director, was among the advocates lauding the House's move.

"Today the House put science and parental choice ahead of ideology for the health of our young people," he said on a statement posted on the group's website. "We're pleased that a bipartisan group of legislators has voted for this bill as it goes to the Senate for consideration."

While there's no argument that the bill is a step in the right direction, the reality is that the bill just isn't as sweet as some advocates are making it out to be.

Palmquist told *Q-Notes* the day of the bill's passage: "Some compromises had to be made to get it through the House. It's certainly not perfect and not everything we wanted but we do believe it is still an important step forward in providing kids accurate information to protect themselves."

Those compromises now jeopardize any true effectiveness that the original bill might have had. As planned, the bill would have made an abstinence-based, comprehensive sex education curriculum the standard across the state. If parents wanted their children to be instructed with the old, unscientific, inaccurate and ineffective abstinence-only approach the bill required them to opt their children out of the comprehensive courses.

The original bill also included teaching respect for marriage and "long-term com-

mitted relationships" — a move opening the door to finally recognizing and validating the very real lives of LGBT students practically ignored in the state's current sex education curriculum.

As the bill neared its final stages in the House, Democratic leadership — no doubt fearful of some perceived backlash from the religious right and Republicans — stripped out any mention of the "committed relationships." The move effectively means LGBT students and their lives will continue to be ignored in sex education.

Democratic leadership also allowed — actually, the Democratic House Whip was the sponsor — the bill to be amended to allow parents to opt-in their children in one of the two courses. Now, parents will be required to return a sex education form indicating which program they wish their child to take. The parents who aren't involved in their children's lives — the very children who probably need comprehensive sex education the most — will be left behind.

This "compromise bill" is weak and leaves too many children out to dry, vulnerable to the same old preventable pregnancies, STDs and other ills that abstinence-only education makes worse, not better.

If LGBT activists, healthy youth advocates and Democratic House leadership actually wanted to fully protect the lives and futures of Tar Heel youth, they would have absolutely insisted on the strongest, most effective and most progressive bill possible; instead, our elected officials kowtowed to special interests on the radical right, and the activists let them do it.

Instead of this one step forward, two steps back approach, it is time our Democratic legislature quit playing kitchen with our state's whiny, childish and backward GOP. It's time to have a spine, and the courage to do what is right.

North Carolina schoolchildren deserve the very best in academic and life skills education, from qualified and committed instructors who have access to the best and most accurate, scientific and medically-proven information available. ▀

## Heehaw, that was fun!

Your editor was very pleased, indeed, to be able to attend this year's Cattle Call Ball at Queen City Stomp. Hundreds of dancers, spectators and bar flies decked out in their best and hottest Levis and Wranglers, cowboy hats and boots stomped their way around the Charlotte Eagle's dance tent while I enjoyed the company of friends and fellow community members.

Hats off to Southern Country Charlotte and Queen City Stomp organizers, as well as all the folks who helped make this year's festival an absolute success. The beneficiaries of this year's fundraising efforts, Time Out Youth and the Lesbian & Gay Community Center, should be proud to have the support of such a great group of folks. ▀

## 'speakout'

Send your letter to the editor or any other thoughts to [editor@q-notes.com](mailto:editor@q-notes.com) or click on over to our website at [www.q-notes.com](http://www.q-notes.com) and join the conversation there. Web comments will be featured in each issue. Limit letters to the editor to 150 words or less and include your name, city and state and a phone number where you can be reached.

## 'online q-poll'

Was coverage of Ted Haggard's Charlotte visit beneficial or a waste of media time and discussion? See the options and vote at [www.q-notes.com](http://www.q-notes.com)